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ABSTRACT

This report examines elementary schools serving poor neighborhoods in New York City that have been able to bring their students up to or above the average for the city on standardized tests in the 1996-1997 school year to see how teachers, parents, students, and principals have worked together. After eliminating schools with new principals and those with "selective" admission, the study focused on 14 schools. There were fewer similarities among these schools than had been expected, as they ranged from very traditional to very innovative. The most important attributes these schools had in common were: (1) a principal who managed instruction; (2) mastery of the curriculum by principals and teachers; (3) a code of professional respect and caring for children; (4) a no-nonsense communication style on the part of the principal; (5) "open-door" classrooms in which teachers were freely observed; (6) parent engagement; and (7) attention and rewards for good academic performance. Recommendations to improve the performance of other elementary schools are based on short-range techniques, the development of longer-range resources, and the recruitment of principals and teachers over the longer range. Appendixes contain school profiles, the principals' interview guide, estimates of the cost of class size reduction, a discussion of the underfunding of city schools, estimates of the costs of adding staff, and a description of current staffing for these schools. (SLD)

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BEATING THE ODDS:
HIGH-ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN HIGH-POVERTY NEIGHBORHOODS

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EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why EPP Did This Study Some schools in New York City are able to close "the achievement gap" between low-income students and their more affluent peers by creating high-quality instructional programs for their children. This report is an attempt to go beyond the slogans and mission statements about "a focus on learning" and "high expectations" and to give civic leaders a description of the day-to-day practices that result in better academic performance by "at-risk" students. We wanted to take a closer look at elementary schools serving the poorest neighborhoods that were able to bring their students up to or above the average for the city on standardized tests in the 1996-97 school year to see how these teachers, parents, students, and principals work together at the school level. An important objective was to evaluate whether the number of successful schools could be increased, since low-performing and mediocre schools are the norm in most low-income communities.

Different Paths to High Achievement EPP looked at 22 elementary schools serving the city's poorest neighborhoods that have appeared at least twice on the Chancellor's Honor Roll over the last three years. We eliminated schools with newly appointed principals and those that were "selective" in their admission of students or had high rates of special education referrals. School-site interviews were conducted in 14 schools. There were far fewer similarities among these schools than we had expected to see. Members of the EPP Monitoring Committee who conducted the interviews suffered from "whiplash" as they went from very innovative schools to very traditional schools. Principal management styles tended to be collaborative, but some were "top down."

Similar Patterns At first, the only shared characteristics seemed to be a dynamic principal, lots of books, a stress on writing in most schools, an orderly school day, a strong work ethic by staff, good communications, engagement in the curriculum, high standards of teacher performance, constant analysis of student achievement, and parents who "backed up the school." Upon closer examination, the most important attributes that all fourteen schools had in common and that were key to higher student achievement were:

- a "walk-around" principal who managed instruction, not just a building, and who had an intelligent "plan" that was accepted by teachers, students, and parents;

- mastery of curriculum by principals and teachers so that they could evaluate whether children were reading and writing at grade level; but even more important, there had to be the correct response when declines in student achievement occurred or new tests or learning standards were introduced, a highwire act that only a few principals are able to master over many years;

- a code of professional respect and caring for children, so that teachers accepted even "top down" or "cutting edge" principals because they had a sense that the principal thought that students were important and what they did as teachers was important;
- principals' expectations were not only expressed as an "agreement," but were followed up with a no-nonsense style of direct communication to staff, students, and parents;
- teachers functioned in "open-door" classrooms where instruction was observed by administrators and their peers, and they shared planning, expertise, and student work;
- parents were also "held accountable" and were briefed on their child's course work, homework assignments, and attendance, and there was quick action if problems emerged in school;
- students got attention and rewards for good performance.

Challenges to Higher Performance Levels While strategies such as professional networks for principals and sharing of "best practices" were cited by some principals, they did not seem to adequately address more fundamental problems that principals mentioned as obstacles that prevented their schools from achieving higher performance levels: inadequate staffing; time consuming fundraising for basic supplies and books; the impact of collective bargaining agreements with the teachers' union; and loneliness and "combat fatigue" on the part of administrators. In addition, there was "punishment for performance" because many of these schools serving low-income communities lost funding once their students' achievement approached city-wide norms. Given these obstacles, only the most driven principals may be able to create the high-quality instructional environments that low-income students so desperately need. The lack of support for school-site administrators coupled with a lack of resources makes the creation of large numbers of successful schools in high-poverty neighborhoods more difficult. How can these problems be solved?

Conclusions and Recommendations Like many organizations engaged in education reform, EPP has been a strong proponent of sanctions for low-performing schools. Less attention has been paid on how to balance these sanctions with rewards for schools that go above mediocre performance levels. In addition, principals seem to have been marginalized within education reform circles. While the statement that "the principal is the instructional leader of the school" is frequently quoted, educational reformers as well as education officials are focused on improvements in teacher preparation or higher learning standards without paying comparable attention to the need for strong management at the school level with the capacity to integrate and maximize these "inputs."

The training and recruitment of principals and assistant principals need objective review and analysis. Administrative positions too often attract candidates who want to escape the classroom and are least likely to be able to create the high quality instructional environments needed to help low-income students excel. School districts across the nation are now experiencing a shrinking pool of qualified candidates for administrative positions, and New York City is particularly vulnerable to a "brain drain" of effective principals lured to the surrounding suburbs by higher salaries, less stress, and more resources for students. The implications of a "leadership" crisis could be particularly negative for schools serving high-poverty communities which have had fewer candidates apply for principal positions. These are EPP's ten recommendations geared to creating more high-achieving schools in low-income neighborhoods:

SHORT-RANGE

1. Add more indicators of neighborhood distress in creating categories for "similar schools."
2. Create objective funding formulas for textbooks and supplies so that every school can have basic per-pupil allocations to meet these needs.
3. End the reduction of state compensatory funding to schools when student achievement improves.
4. Review the quality of training programs for principals in New York City against nationally recognized programs.
5. Reduce early-grade class sizes in all elementary schools.

LONGER-RANGE: RESOURCES

6. Provide sufficient funding to ensure a sound, basic education for New York City students.
7. Provide more staffing support for administration in the elementary schools.

LONGER-RANGE: RECRUITMENT

8. Initiate a pilot project of having high-performing principals serve as mentors to apprentice assistant principals.
9. Initiate additional pilot projects beyond the one sponsored by the New York City Partnership in order to evaluate the impact of merit rewards and the creation of "lead" teacher positions.
10. Evaluate current hiring procedures and practices to determine whether they support a merit promotion system.

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PART I

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception as a coalition during the height of the city's fiscal crisis in 1976, the Educational Priorities Panel's major mission has been to direct resources to public school children with the greatest needs for high quality instruction and services. Twenty-three years later, staffing levels, art and physical education programs, and school building conditions fall short of pre-1976 standards. In 1984, for the first time in state history, the average per-pupil funding level of the New York City school system fell below the average for the state, and this "funding gap" has continued to grow larger. In the 1996-97 school year, the average per-pupil expenditure in New York City was $1,506 below the average per-pupil expenditure for the rest of the state, according to the State Education Department's *Analysis of School Finances* (1998, Table 10). Had city students received the same resources as the average for the rest of the state, the Board of Education's budget for its schools would have been $9.7 billion in fiscal year 1997, not $8.2 billion. Though the New York City school system is located in the state's highest cost region and educates the highest proportion of students from poor and immigrant communities, its per-pupil funding level now places it in the bottom third of school districts in the state, the rest of which are in low-cost rural communities. The result is that New York City has the highest average class sizes in the state and among the lowest salaries for teachers and school administrators in the Downstate region. Lower-than-average resources for higher-than-average student needs is a prescription for high rates of academic failure.

The greatest additional costs for the city school system are those associated with inadequate instruction, for example, inappropriate referrals to special education, remediation, lengthy stays in English-as-a-second language and bilingual classes, delayed high school graduation and grade retention. Efforts to rebuild the instructional program to pre-1976 standards, however, are often viewed as "too expensive." EPP believes that good classroom instruction, where children learn to the best of their abilities, is *the most effective* cost savings strategy, but we also understand that creating an optimal learning environment is a complex undertaking.

Many "trains" have to run on time for schools to function smoothly: building repairs, security, transportation, food service, curricula, accurate payroll checks, timely program funds, record keeping, book orders, and staff selection, to mention only a few. But the only "train" that matters, the only criterion for real efficiency and effectiveness, is whether most students in a school are learning skills and subject matter appropriate to their grade. Learning sometimes takes a backseat because in an underfunded system there are many competing needs and developing crises.

EPP set out to describe successful practices in a sample of schools that succeed against the odds. This effort grew out of a 1996 EPP report on how ten public schools were able to improve their students' academic achievement levels so that their schools were taken off the state's list of low-performing schools. A major finding of *Getting off the List: School Improvement in New York City* was that the schools that succeeded in turning around focused on student learning as a priority. This was an important reminder to our coalition that our work on budget analysis and advocacy, guided by principles of cost, efficiency, and transparency, has to be placed within the context of instructional effectiveness.

Getting off the List attempted to answer the question of how principals, teachers, and school planning teams, at a greater disadvantage than those in most schools in the rest of the state because they had fewer resources and students with greater needs, marshaled their personnel and dollars to bring about school improvement. But for the majority of schools we studied, this improvement meant going from the lowest performance to mediocre performance. EPP knew that there were schools serving high-poverty communities where students' test scores were at or above the city's average. We wanted to find out if there were common patterns among these schools that we could identify through interviews of school staff and parents that could explain their success.

There were many unanswered questions when we began this study. These resulted in many hurdles and more resistance than in our earlier study of turnaround schools. Among them were:

What is a Good School? At meetings about public schools, it is not unusual to hear statements that "we know what it takes to run a good school. All we have to do is put it into practice." But in actuality there is a lack of consensus among educators and reformers as to what constitutes "a good school" or even "good practices." While some education reformers may quibble over what constitutes improvement in a low-performing school, the debate sharpens considerably when it comes to ideal practices. Statements such as "It's really a mix of approaches" and "I'll recognize a good school when I see one" also rest on the values of the observer. Even within the Educational Priorities Panel, some representatives of member organizations favor a literature-based approach to reading and collaborative decision-making, while others favor a phonics approach and strong leadership by the principal. Whether instruction and curriculum should stress mastery of content or problem-solving is another debate. These differences carry over to educators and researchers as well. Much of the literature on "good schools" is based on advocacy for one model over others.

Lacking a consensus of what constitutes a "good school" and seeking an objective criterion for selecting a sample of schools for this report, EPP chose elementary schools with the highest average student test scores on the Board of Education's third-grade reading tests. These were the "winners" in the 1997 ranking of schools in the "high-needs" category, but was high quality instruction actually taking place here or merely good test-preparation practices? On the other hand, many low-performing schools engage in considerable test preparation without success. Inevitably, selecting schools on this basis opened us up to criticism that we had merely chosen schools that spend a considerable part of the school year drilling their students for standardized tests.

This remains a valid question even after this study has been concluded. There were few options for EPP other than using standardized test results. EPP members could have done extensive classroom observations and asked a series of questions of large numbers of school staff to determine school quality, but this would have required an initial consensus by EPP members about the profile of a "good" school. Furthermore, in comparison to the full complement of staff, such as guidance counselors and nurses, a well-rounded curriculum, and pleasant buildings in much of the rest of the state's public schools, even these "high-performing" schools fall far short of the standard for what most parents would want from a "good school."

Can the Dynamics of a High-Achieving School be Adequately Described? In education circles, words and phrases tend to become devalued currency within a relatively short time span. Now, administrators and teachers at even the lowest-performing public schools spout slogans and mission statements about "high expectations for students" and "we focus on learning." The challenge for EPP was to go behind the slogans and attempt to capture the descriptions of day-to-day practices that separated these schools from other schools not doing as well. In other words, this report is an attempt to find out how "high expectations" and a "focus on learning" are operationalized in schools where there is evidence of success.

An insightful comment before we began the study came from a central office Board of Education official who told us that, ultimately, effective schools come down to leadership by extraordinary principals whose ability to inspire innovation and teamwork cannot be easily defined or easily duplicated. After 56 interviews this point remains valid. It is difficult, even for a report of this length and detail, to capture the motivation and attitude behind the verbal reports of principals, teachers and parents about school practices. To some extent, what was described to us is not that different from the shared ideals and routines of less successful schools, except that there were indications that in these high-performing schools beliefs were put into practice and routines were purposeful and consistent. Every principal we interviewed was an excellent communicator, exuded self-confidence, and had a charismatic presence. No amount of quotations from interviews in this report can fully reflect these attributes.

Our objective in this report is not to attempt to describe in depth the characteristics of "the charismatic school leader" or "the high-functioning school team," but instead to describe in purposely simple terms the day-to-day practices reported to us by the staff members and parents in high-achieving schools in poor neighborhoods. Our objective as a coalition is to inform the larger civic community about New York City public schools in a thoughtful way by describing the currents of ideas circulating among educators and by looking at budgets to see what decisions have been made. EPP's work often comes down to translating education and budget jargon into simple English.

This report was never an attempt to capture *all* the characteristics of a high-performing school. EPP, however, accomplished what we set out to do: define for civic groups some of the patterns and practices of high-achieving schools serving high-poverty neighborhoods. The practices we describe are not complex in and of themselves, but EPP recognizes that running a high-performing school is a complex enterprise dedicated to a process, learning, which is not fully understood. It also involves a commitment to children, a high degree of intelligence, and hard work. This report barely scratches the surface of the processes at work in producing a good education for students. But it has deepened our coalition's respect for the accomplishments of dedicated professionals at work in New York City's public schools.

CHAPTER I A VARIETY OF APPROACHES TO LEARNING AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

EPP's objective From April 1998 to October 1998, eight members of the Monitoring Committee of the Educational Priorities Panel conducted interviews at seventeen elementary schools that had each appeared at least twice on the last three Chancellor's Honor Roll lists because their student achievement levels were significantly higher than other "high-needs" schools on city standardized reading tests. An analysis of interviews at fourteen schools are the subject of this report. Our objective was to document practices that resulted in sustained high performance in neighborhoods where poorly functioning or mediocre schools are the norm.

Our sample of schools Of 669 elementary schools that were ranked in 1997 on the basis of standardized reading test results, 261 serve "high poverty" or "highest poverty" communities as defined by the Board of Education. Fifty-three of these schools, the top 20%, fell within the performance category of "far above average" for schools serving similar high-poverty communities. Our criteria for selecting the elementary schools for this study from among the fifty-three schools were:

- They had to have appeared at least twice on the last three Honor Roll lists. (*Ranking of Elementary and Middle Schools by Reading Achievement* issued annually by the Board of Education)

- At least two-thirds of their students had to be eligible for free lunch. (Based on Title 1 "School Detail Information" for the 1996-97 school year in Board of Education's *Office of Budget Operations and Review Memorandum No. 1* for FY '98)

- At least one-third of the population served by the schools was receiving public assistance. (Based on Title 1 "School Detail Information" for the 1996-97 school year in Board of Education's *Office of Budget Operations and Review Memorandum No. 1* for FY '98)

- The elementary schools did not recruit large numbers of students with academic potential through a large "Gifted and Talented" program. (Based on phone inquiries)

- The elementary schools did not exclude low-achieving students through a very high special education referral rate. (Review of *Annual School Report*)

- The schools' 1996-97 average student test scores on the CBT-R English Language Arts test were above the average for the city. (Based on *Ranking of Elementary and Middle Schools by Reading Achievement* issued annually by the Board of Education)

We came up with a list of twenty-two schools. Of this sample, two principals refused to be interviewed. After interviewing one newly assigned principal of a high-performing school, it was decided that all four schools with new principals should be excluded from the study. We discovered during the course of another school-site interview that students above second grade were primarily "Gifted and Talented" students from the entire school district, so those interviews were also eliminated. Another school where interviews took place was also excluded from this report because, during the drafting of this report, the school was under investigation by the Special Investigator for the Public Schools for tampering with test results.

In half of the fourteen schools that are the subject of this report, EPP Monitoring Committee members were able to interview principals, teachers, and parents during their school visit. In the remaining seven schools, either the length of the interview of the principal precluded interviewing other members of the school community, or the visit was conducted when the school was not open and only staff members were available.

The per-pupil general education funding level of all the elementary schools in this study during the 1996-97 school year averaged $6,203 and ranged from a low of $4,973 to a high of $7,921. Nine had per-pupil funding levels that were below the citywide average of $6,277, but only six were below the per-pupil funding average for their community school district. Our assumption that these schools, no matter how high-performing, were still limited in resources was confirmed in all interviews of principals. The school with the highest per-pupil funding level was the only school in our sample that received grants from foundations or individuals that exceeded $10,000. All schools raised only modest amounts of money from their parent raffles and candy sales or through school book stores. The highest amount raised through these types of volunteer efforts was $15,000 by a school that had an annual walk-a-thon. The largest source of additional funding that these schools received came from the federal government. The Title 1 program for low-income students came to an average of $456,322 for the schools in this study. A similar state funded program, called Pupils with Compensatory Education Needs (PCEN), provided much less, on average $200,171. While the federal funding varied according to the number of pupils in the school who were eligible for free lunch, there was no pattern in state compensatory funding. For example, in the three high-poverty schools with over 1000 students, one school received no PCEN funding, another received about $75,000, and a third received over $550,000. These funds appear to be governed more by the budget policies of superintendents of community school districts than by an objective formula.

Expectations EPP members embarked on this new study with the assumption that these were schools where principals and teachers were focused on student learning as their first priority. Interview responses by principals, teachers, and parents attested to the priority given to student achievement and mastery of reading, writing, mathematics, and problem-solving skills. Our second assumption was that these high-achieving schools were different from the turnaround schools we had studied previously. By asking whether the school had always been high-performing, we discovered that this was true in only six schools. The remaining eight schools had previously been low-performing, including one that had been on the State Education Department's list of low-performing schools, called the SURR list (Schools under Registration Review). The only distinction between this set of schools and those in EPP's previous report is that student achievement levels, as measured by standardized reading tests, exceeded the city's average.

Our third assumption was that most of these high-achieving schools would have a stable teaching staff rather than suffering from "the revolving door" phenomenon that characterizes many schools in low-income communities where inexperienced teachers come into the school following the exit of barely experienced teachers. This turned out to be correct, but in many schools, "teacher stability" turned out to be less stable than we had anticipated. The average proportion of teachers with five-year seniority in nine schools was 63%, relatively good for hard-to-staff schools but below the city-wide average of 69%. In three schools, 82% to 92% of the teachers had been teaching for five years or more and another school was close to the city average. At the other end of the spectrum, in one school only 49% of the teachers had five years of seniority.

A surprising variety of high-performing schools The interview guide was designed to elicit as much information as possible about the relationship of the principal to teachers and to the school's planning committee. Our hunch was that, similar to the turnaround schools, a pattern would emerge about the ways in which most principals hired teachers, supervised them, or related to the planning committee. Was there some magic formula of teacher management? Another objective was to see if there were any similarities among the schools in their instructional programs, that is, curricula, textbooks, or, at least, methods of staff development.

Halfway through the school interviews, it was clear to EPP Monitoring Committee members that there was a multiplicity of styles, school cultures, approaches to instruction, and staff development. There were only few, superficial patterns that we could discern: 1) The school aide or guard at the door would greet us with courtesy and efficiency. We didn't encounter officiousness or have to wait for side conversations with another aide or parent to end. 2) The buildings appeared to be well kept, clean, and brightly decorated with bulletin boards. All fourteen principals reported that, indeed, they were getting along well with their custodian, though some related horror stories about previous custodians. Good relations with the current custodian turned out to be one of the few consistent responses in the study. 3) Upon being ushered into the principal's office, we would meet someone who was an excellent communicator. One of the hazards of this study was "charisma radiation" as week after week Committee members were bombarded with deeply felt beliefs about instruction and about how public elementary schools should be run. The problem was that these beliefs varied considerably as did the day-to-day practices of the schools, so the potential for "ideological whiplash" became a hazard for Committee members. Here are just a few of the differences among the fourteen schools in this study:

- High-achieving schools ranged from "model schools" to those that have largely been ignored. Several of the schools we visited had long been recognized as exemplary schools. The staff was used to touring visitors around, including a series of mayors and newspaper and television reporters, and had a well-practiced "story" to tell. Of our sample of schools, five were featured in Clara Hemphill's 1997 *The Parents' Guide to New York City's Best Public Elementary Schools.* On the other hand, about half of the schools seemed to have had few outside visitors beyond school officials. The principals were perplexed about why we wanted to interview them and demanded "proof" that their schools had appeared on the Chancellor's Honor Roll of schools.

- Some principals did not perceive their school as high-achieving. This was particularly true of schools serving the lowest-income neighborhoods in school districts with generally more affluent working class or middle class communities. Within their community school districts, their average test scores were low in comparison to other schools, but in comparison to schools serving other lowest-income communities throughout the city they were far above average.

- The schools ranged from very traditional to very innovative. Committee members visited some of the most innovative schools in New York City. One was following a model pioneered by Yale University psychologist James Comer which relies heavily on parental involvement and on meeting the social as well as the intellectual needs of children. Another school was committed to the theory of "multiple intelligences" of Howard Gardner, a Harvard University psychologist, which stresses a well-rounded curriculum to develop the strengths of each child and to infuse the arts throughout the curriculum. Yet another practiced a method advocated by Joseph Renzulli of individualized instruction with careful charting of each student's progress and her/his strengths and weaknesses. In contrast, three principals rejected all reform models as largely bogus. Other principals were not as negative about innovation, but asserted at some point in the interview that some of the new approaches, if they worked, were just a repackaging of traditional teaching methods, and that they found that many "fads" didn't work. Another indication of the range of approaches in our sample of schools is that six had classes in each grade that were homogeneously grouped by ability levels with a "top" class and a "bottom" class (a practice called "tracking") and two others did so starting in second grade, while another six schools had classes that were heterogeneously grouped.

- Principal management styles tended to be collaborative, but some were "top down." One principal told us that the curriculum was designed to be "teacher proof" and that the school "is not run by a committee." Two other principals seemed to be uncomfortable with working with a school planning committee and had essentially met only the minimum requirements in order to submit a Comprehensive Education Plan to their district superintendent. The rest had good to excellent relationships with their school planning committees and welcomed collaboration. One school planning committee started long before the School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making initiative of Chancellor Fernandez was implemented in 1990 and another shortly after. One principal broke the mold and could not even be placed on a continuum of "top-down" to collaborative. Though he had been an assistant principal for "about a hundred years," he stated that he was "not really the principal type." He had delegated curricular issues to a committee that was headed by "a teacher who is an intellectual." The assistant principal attended most meetings in the school, and if there were outside meetings, the principal would tap teachers to attend. He saw himself as a roaming "social worker" settling issues as they came up. The EPP interviewers dubbed him "the delegator," because he had focused on developing leadership among his staff members.

- Schools varied tremendously in their approach to arts education, parent volunteers, linkages with outside organizations, and even the need for a school mission. One principal told us, "I don't believe in the arts." As for mission statements, one said they were "a lot of hooey" and another said they were "a bunch of crap." Some did not want outside organizations in their schools or parents helping out during the school day because they could "create problems." At the other extreme, our sample of schools included those who had highly developed art programs, many linkages to outside organizations, robust parent involvement, and a deeply emotional commitment to their school's stated mission.

- The schools' "high-poverty" neighborhoods varied substantially in their degree of distress. Since Monitoring Committee members used public transportation to reach most schools they visited, they had ample opportunity to gather an impression of the immediate surroundings. Some of the schools, especially several in Brooklyn, were surrounded by graffiti-marked buildings in disrepair, storefronts boarded up on the commercial strip, and large housing projects in the distance. Few people were on the streets. Where there were stores, the cashiers functioned in cages of bulletproof glass. In these neighborhoods, the principal, the teacher or the parent would inevitably list as "a school achievement" that their playground was safe during the day. (But not during the night. In these schools, administrators routinely picked up bottles, needles and used condoms in the playground before the school opened.) In contrast, other neighborhoods appeared to be stable, working-class communities of small, well-tended single family homes or large, well-kept apartment buildings with no graffiti in sight. The small commercial strips bustled with shoppers, and the stores had open counters with no bulletproof glass in sight. Though some neighborhoods can change dramatically when night comes, no parent or staff member in these stable, working-class neighborhoods mentioned "a safe playground" as an achievement. EPP's criterion of poverty resulted in a sample of schools that fell into two different categories of "similar schools." Some of the schools we judged as situated in more stable communities fell into the "highest poverty" category of similar schools, while one school in one of the most distressed neighborhoods fell into the "high poverty" category.

- Many principals perceived their schools as "getting better," but some stated that their schools were "slipping" or in decline. We had selected our sample of schools on the basis of student test scores during the 1996-97 school year and their inclusion on the Chancellor's Honor Roll in two out of the last three years. As EPP learned from our previous study, even a school experiencing a dramatic improvement in student performance is not guaranteed a smooth, unbroken upward trajectory on test performance, but, instead, may experience a zigzag line showing a general upward direction in average student test scores. But the concerns of three principals seemed to go beyond a one-year drop in student test scores or the use of "fear of failure" as a motivating technique. Two mentioned problems in filling teacher vacancies and a third stated that he had not yet figured out "the problem." This study is ultimately a snapshot in time of school performance, and the reality is that we have captured schools on the upswing as well as those on the downswing. The new 1998 state mandated, fourth grade English Language Arts test results show that out of the fourteen high-poverty schools, only ten remain near or above the citywide average for all students tested. Three schools with high percentages of special education students, whose scores for the first time are included in average test results, are no longer ranked among higher-achieving elementary schools. One school serving the largest immigrant community also fell behind.

- Two principals did not have harmonious relationships with at least some of their staff. In our previous study of turnaround schools, almost all principals cited their positive relationship with the UFT Chapter leader as helpful to their efforts at improvement. This was largely the pattern in this sample of schools, with the exception of two principals who described lengthy battles with teachers' union representatives.

End note to this chapter: These differences among high-achieving schools must be understood within the context of increased similarity in programs in all city public elementary schools. EPP members had not anticipated how much elementary schools had changed in the intervening three years between our monitoring studies. Almost all principals mentioned that more of their parents were working outside of the home because of the new welfare policies. What also struck us was the degree to which Chancellor Crew had succeeded in shaping programs at the school level. The bulk of our interviews took place in the spring of 1998 when school planning committees were in the process of writing and submitting their Comprehensive Education Plan (called "CEP") to the community superintendent. The very act of crafting a plan to improve student achievement impressed EPP members as a process that seemed to have achieved a more genuine level of collaboration than previous attempts, such as the School-Based Management/ Shared Decision Making initiative of Chancellor Fernandez.

Another positive discovery was that the stated intention by high-ranking Board of Education officials to give more discretion to schools in staff selection seemed to have been put into effect. All principals reported that over the last couple of years they had been given much more discretion by their districts in hiring decisions and that they were able to interview multiple candidates at community school district sessions. Another similarity in every school we visited was that the bilingual program was being "rethought" or "restructured." We were unable to learn if this was a result of a policy directive or merely coincidence.

As principals readily admitted, after years of suffering budget cuts, there was "some" money once again. What EPP members learned from specific answers to their questions, however, was that most of this new money came down to the school level tied to specific initiatives. This has resulted in a growing similarity in school programs and resources. For example, for the first time extra money had been set aside in the city budget for school books and, in addition, the state legislature had raised the state textbook allocation after a long period with no increases. We were pleased to learn that every principal we interviewed mentioned purchasing books in the last few years. All the schools we visited were also in the process of getting more computers. Five schools were scheduled for major repairs, such as roof replacements or facade reconstruction, an impressive percentage given the small number of schools in our sample. A number of the schools we visited were engaged in collaborations with outside art groups or institutions funded through Project ART and two were beginning to purchase musical instruments. All seventeen schools had an after-school Project READ program for the lowest-achieving students in the early grades, though some characterized it as "a community school district program."

The State Board of Regents' new testing practices are also dramatically influencing all elementary schools. As the EPP Monitoring Committee interviews progressed from the end of the 1997-98 school year into the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, we noted a marked increase in anxiety from principals and teachers about the State Education Department's new English Language Arts and math tests for fourth-grade students.

CHAPTER II

WHAT DO THESE SCHOOLS HAVE IN COMMON?

Why are these schools more successful in actualizing good intentions? One of the problems in this study was that interview responses showed that staff members shared practices, values and opinions prevalent throughout the New York City public school system. The EPP Monitoring Committee interviews of principals included four questions on why their school was high-achieving and the interview for parents and teachers included a similar question. In no particular order, here are some of the most common interview responses:

-- high expectations for children, child-focused...
-- focused on learning, we are a learning community, we have a shared philosophy...
-- good teaching staff, we know what we're doing, high standards for teachers...
-- the principal is an educational leader, the principal is a master of teaching...
-- collaboration, we share information, everything is known...
-- hard work, effort...
-- teachers are supported, get what they need, and in exchange they perform, no excuses...
-- high standards curriculum, lots of books, emphasis on literature and writing...
-- partnership with parents so that they can help their child achieve, supportive parents...

The problem with most of these responses was that the EPP Committee had heard them all before, even from staff of low-achieving schools. Given the Chancellor's objective of improving student achievement, only the most uninformed school staff person would fail to reference learning as her/his primary goal when being interviewed by members of a civic group. The challenge for members of the EPP Monitoring Committee and staff was to go behind the slogans and to attempt to capture the descriptions of day-to-day practices that separated these schools from other schools not doing as well. Why had these schools been able to transform slogans into reality?

Turning off the sound Committee members came up with a short list of school dynamics and practices that came through in many, if not all, of the school interviews. As discussed in the first chapter, there was a wide variety of styles, approaches, and attitudes among the fourteen schools, so the list turned out to be short:

A strong work ethic and long hours: "We work hard" was the most frequently used phrase throughout all the interview responses. Several principals stated that they could not have undertaken the job of principal if their children had not been grown. "I have no life" and "These hours are killing me" were duplicated word for word by several principals without any trace of irony or self-effacing humor. Indeed, one touching similarity in our school visits is how often the principal's office looked "lived in." This work ethic was not limited to administrators. In ten of the schools, the principal reported that some teachers arrived early or stayed late.

Management by walking around Almost all of the principals and most teachers and parents reported that the principal was walking all over the building during the day. Many of the principals stated that their own work day began at 6:00 am and ended at 5 pm or 6 pm because they did not want to do their paper work while the school was open and some reserved the early morning for meetings with individual teachers or parents. These were principals with a hands-on approach to teachers, students, and parents. Of the two who did not mention touring the building, one had assistant principals whose assignments were to "walk around."

A consistent, multi-year "Plan," "Moral Vision," or "Motivation System" When asked what advice they would give to a new principal or why some principals did not succeed, all principals stated the need for a "plan." Several respondents who had attended a Harvard University program for principals went a step further and stressed that schools needed to be organized around a deeply felt moral imperative. Another set of principals, most of whom were involved in sports and had a background as assistant principals in middle schools, spoke about how they had created successful motivational systems. Particularly striking was that the principals' description of how they operationalized their "plan," "moral vision" or "motivation system" spanned several years.

Good relationships and communication systems What distinguished the principals of these high-achieving schools from the turnaround schools was that more of them stressed communication with students and parents as just as important as communication with staff in "selling ideas." We were told frequently in response to questions on curriculum and instruction that "parents have to get on board too" or "students have to be motivated to do better." Almost all of these schools have a September program to give parents an overview of what was going to be taught to their children. "Sharing" and "everything is known in this building" came up frequently. Particularly striking was how often respondents in traditional schools called the planning committee "the heart of the school" or the "brain center."

Engagement in the curriculum with some principals focused on efficiency of instructional time Most principals saw the interview as an opportunity to describe instructional strategies that had worked and saw themselves as master teachers themselves who would not ask a teacher to do something that they could not execute in the classroom. These principals were able to quickly define their school's academic approach, orientation, and goals to us in ways that were persuasive -- and in some cases passionate. Even the "delegator" described how he wanted to see his students develop into "little scholars" with the help of the school's literary magazine. Consistent throughout almost all the interviews with principals was a focus on "what works best" for instruction in terms of textbooks, teaching techniques, programs, or how the school day was organized.

Support for teachers and, in return, an expectation that they will perform Prevalent throughout our interviews with these principals was the articulation of an implied contract. "I give teachers in this school what they need to function, so I expect them to do a good job in the classroom." "We do not let teachers sink or swim here," said one principal. Support was interpreted to mean staff development, textbooks and materials, creating a nice atmosphere, backing them up in their relationships with parents, and frequent positive comments and notes.

Lots of books Many schools had libraries, though some had been forced to convert their rooms into classroom space or no longer had funding for a librarian position. But all classrooms were well-stocked with their own libraries. In some schools the volume of trade books sold through student-run "book stores" was mind-boggling (up to 10,000 books). In the interviews, the principals described at some length their strategies for getting more textbooks and trade books.

In most but not all schools, students are given writing assignments rather than workbooks One principal told us that he read an article stating that the reason that suburban students do much better on standardized tests is that they are not asked "to fill in the blanks" in workbooks but are required to write book reports and essays. Writing, rather than low-level skill exercises, appears to encourage language mastery at an earlier age. All of the schools required book reports, but a few still used workbooks in the early grades.

Orderly building Especially in the schools that had "turned around," many principals stressed that order had to come first before they could begin to make changes in the curriculum. Even in highly overcrowded schools surrounded by portable classrooms where principals and teachers reported "stress" as a factor, the buildings were cheerful and pleasant.

Constant analysis of student achievement, and in some schools, a strong reward system for student achievement. Some schools were particularly focused on frequent testing and analyzing the hard data of test results. As in our previous study, we found some schools where they administered their own tests every six to ten weeks to ensure that students had absorbed the lesson plans. In six schools we found an additional pattern of highly developed systems of competition and recognition for individual students or for classes.

A "partnership" with parents, and in some schools, a special focus on kindergarten parents In our previous study of the turnaround schools there was a variety of types of parent participation (volunteering, fundraising), but few meshed with highly idealistic goals. In contrast, in these high-performing schools there was a consistent view of parents: their role was to help their children read as many books as possible, do homework, and attend school regularly. "We want them to back up the school." Particularly noteworthy were two principals who provided kindergarten parents registering in the spring with an outline of what their children should know by fall. While some principals did not see building up the parent association as a particularly important objective, they all believed in clear communication with parents about the school's academic program. In some schools, intense follow-up with parents of failing children was considered to be an important staff function.

A no-nonsense, direct communication style By and large, respondents did not beat around the bush. In fact, some were quite blunt. They were proud of their school's achievements, but they were forthcoming about failures and problems. Though their answers were replete with acronyms and references to various models of education practice, they were not hydroplaning on surface rhetoric or jargon. Several principals seemed to delight in puncturing the "mystique" surrounding education or their roles as the education leader. "This is not rocket science, you know. It's all pretty simple. You just have to do what you say." Another said, "I don't care what they say, teachers teach to the test."

CHAPTER III SEPARATING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

The need to go to "expert" interpreters EPP Monitoring Committee members were pleased that they had created a "short list" of attributes from over 200 pages of interview transcripts. These attributes also seemed to characterize most, if not all, of the variety of schools visited, from the most innovative, cutting-edge schools to the most traditional. By the end of our list-making, however, we felt that we had made little progress. We no longer had a list of common slogans, but our list of attributes could characterize most well-run schools and even those that were fairly mediocre. The short list provided us with clues, but the mystery remained.

At this point in the study, we decided that it would be useful to consult with experts, "old hands" who are in New York City public elementary schools on a fairly regular basis but are not part of the Chancellor's or a superintendent's staff; who understand the constraints of underfunding and the challenges of serving high-poverty neighborhoods; and who are not narrow advocates for a particular approach to education or teaching--or, at least, have developed a broader perspective from having seen waves of different approaches come and go. These specifications eliminated college professors and staff members of education reform and policy organizations. Our final group of sixteen "experts" turned out to be staff representatives of unions representing teachers (United Federation of Teachers) and principals and assistant principals (Council of Administrators and Supervisors), textbook sales representatives, freelance education consultants, and parent leaders. The interviews were conducted over the fall and winter, some face-to-face while others were over the phone.

Shortening the list of attributes of high-achieving schools to three EPP Monitoring Committee members were pleased that the short list that we had developed by consensus conformed to a prevailing sense of what makes a good school among the "old hands" we had turned to for help. Since there was almost universal agreement about the attributes, most of the discussions with experts consisted of their ranking of the relative importance of each characteristic. At the end of this process we realized that most of the attributes were merely preconditions for high student performance. The following attributes were singled out as the key elements of success.

1. Hard work and a "hands-on" principal are essential, but the principal's "plan" is key. Our experts agreed that a school could not become high-performing without a strong work ethic. But they have been in many schools where staff worked hard and spent long hours in the building, but the results were poor or mediocre. All the experts stated that in their experience, most principals worked long hours, so this factor was discounted as the critical factor. They also stated that it was commonplace for principals to make a constant tour of their buildings and to assign their assistant principals to the same type of information gathering.

> "Many principals are out there. But what are they doing? What will they do with the information? They must be out there, but what they're looking for and how they are going to use the information they're gathering is another matter...They're visible, all right. But so what? Lots of these [visible] principals are overwhelmed with the details."

Another expert said that because principals work long hours, some tend to push teachers to work extra hours and some succeed, but there is no "pay off" in terms of higher student achievement. We commonly heard the phrase that school staff can work hard, but not work smart. Effort, by itself, was not key. On the other hand, the experts universally agreed that without a "hands on" principal, extra work and extra hours, a school could not become high-achieving in New York City. In the suburbs, schools have more staff, smaller classes, more students from middle class and English-speaking parents, fewer budget problems, and fewer problems in getting repairs and equipment. All these supports were absent in the city. Therefore principals, in particular, had to put in extra hours in order for the school to function at even an adequate level. "Principals who take long lunches, show up when the teachers show up, or stay in their offices most of the day for meetings or paperwork or phone conversations aren't going to make it."

"The plan" had to be an intelligent plan, if not brilliant. Also, it had to be accepted and understood by most of the school's instructional and administrative staff. The plan itself did not necessarily have to evolve from the principal and could have been crafted by the school planning committee, an assistant principal who cared about the curriculum or a teacher. But no plan could succeed if the principal did not support it, even in the most collaborative school, because only the principal was able to fully follow up on its implementation. It was stressed over and over again that a plan that evolved collaboratively or was ruthlessly imposed by a principal-dictator had to be an essentially good plan and had to be accepted by the rest of the staff.

2. The principal and the teachers must be engaged in the curriculum and it must be the same curriculum. Good relationships, good communication, support for teachers in return for good performance, partnership with parents, orderly school day, lots of books, and even the principal's "plan" will not result in high achievement unless there is a good grasp of curriculum, which is subject to constant change as new tests and new learning standards are introduced. The primacy of being able to navigate curricular issues came out in almost all of our interviews with our experts and gave us a deeper understanding of the slogans, "The principal is the educational leader" and "The principal must be a master teacher" even when the respondents referred to exceptions to the rule. Once again, these attributes on our short list turned out to be important prerequisites for high- achieving schools, but mastery of curricula was cited as the key ingredient that distinguished these schools from ones where mediocre student performance was the norm.

Obviously, it would be difficult for high student achievement to result from schools marked by conflict, cliques, poor communication, a sense by staff that they are being undermined, disorder, a school day that "drifts," and a lack of books and other instructional resources. On the other hand, we were bombarded with examples of why many attributes on our short list were meaningless without an informed and intelligent focus on learning:

> "Some of the schools I go into are love fests. Everybody likes each other. Then I ask curricular and staff development questions, and they can't give me answers -- then I really can tell. They get caught up in administrative trivia."

> "Every principal says the same thing. 'I support my teachers. I give teachers what they need, so I expect them to perform.' This is a common attitude among all principals...The important thing is, does the principal have a clue as to what 'good performance' is?"

> "You will see a lot of books in some schools...Are the books reflecting what the kids need to know? You know, a kid in the fourth grade can easily read twenty-five books meant for second graders. So he meets the Chancellor's quota, big deal. Who's pushing this kid to read books on the fourth grade level?"

> "Do they have 'drive-by' workshops? If you want to change how teachers teach in the classroom -- come into the workshop and then come into the classroom and show the teacher how to apply what she learned. This is useful."

One ex-principal put it succinctly, "I did not see administration as my major function. My primary priority was the administration of instruction."

All of the respondents agreed with the commonly repeated statement by principals that there had to be an orderly school day before instructional improvements could take place. But in many schools, order becomes the objective and the academic "lift-off" in student academic achievement never takes place. All the various functions of the school operate smoothly, the school planning committee members draft the improvement plan and mission statement, the lunchroom is orderly, the parent association meetings are held regularly, and the textbooks and supplies are ordered. "All the trains are running on time," but the students are not getting very far. Order is a precondition, but by itself it does not lead to higher levels of student achievement.

"Engagement," "excitement,' "commitment" came up repeatedly in the interviews with the experts as well as with the principals. In order for a concentration of low-income children to begin to compete, as a group, with their more affluent peers, the "value added" element of a school must be considerable. High expectations for children are not enough; they must go beyond being "hopes." There must be a structured, and fairly constant "push" in the instructional program towards reaching higher levels of student achievement. This can come only when there is an understanding of curriculum.

One expert identified a phenomenon that plagued elementary schools in particular. He stated that there is a bias in favor of male principals whose only experience has been in middle schools, even to the exclusion of females with an extensive background in elementary education. Many of these newly hired administrators do not understand early childhood education and tend not to recognize the importance of kindergarten and first grade and focus primarily on the upper elementary grades. These principals can run into trouble with their staff members about the curriculum and conflict emerges.

> "It's when the principal wants to pretend he knows the elementary school curriculum that tensions continue. Sometimes there's no conflict because no one has the guts to say 'The emperor has no clothes.' But you have a disappointed staff of teachers when the principal does not have the background and a strong curricular base in the elementary years."

A successful resolution of this conflict that this expert had often seen is when the principal "delegates" the curricular decisions to the assistant principal or a teacher.

3. Constant analysis of student achievement is an important attribute, but the correct response is even more important. This item on the short list of attributes brought the most discussion. Monitoring by itself was not viewed as a critical element in high achievement, but the right responses to dips in student test achievement was key as well as continuous staff development to keep up with changes. Here are the explanations for this consensus:

> Paper strategies: Some principals attempt "improvement" by a variety of strategies that focus on changing students, not student performance. For example, some principals identify the lowest-achieving students and refer them to special education, thus eliminating these low-performing students from the pool of students whose test scores appear on measurements of their school's performance. (This is no longer possible on the state's fourth grade tests.)
>
> Wrong decisions: There is a focus on "test grade" that measures the school's performance as opposed to looking at the quality of curriculum and instruction in Kindergarten and first and second grade so that the students are adequately prepared. Some of the other strategies developed by principals or school planning committees can also have disastrous consequences for the curriculum. One expert said that in a school where he used to work as a teacher, "The scores were going down. There were eight cluster positions in art, music, and gym. They took them all away." Instead, the school focused on remediation.
>
> An assumption that high student achievement will continue: One consultant told us there is a hidden risk once schools raise achievement levels. "Even in very good schools, I find that there is an assumption among principals and teachers that once they get a cohort of teachers that are well trained, this will guarantee continued success. It does not work this way. You have to have continuous professional development even for well-trained, experienced teachers. You have to keep it up." Tests as well as program directives are subject to continuous change.

While success feeds on success, as one principal put it, drops in student test scores can always occur. Good teachers retire, transfer to a school nearer their home, leave the city, or get promoted to administrative positions and the challenge is to fill these vacancies. The wrong decisions can be made at any point, and the risks are continuing. The principal and teaching staff's engagement in curriculum is some guarantee that new teachers will be brought up to speed, and wrong decisions reversed. Some principals don't have enough focus on instruction or knowledge of curriculum to consistently make the right corrections.

The EPP Monitoring Committee started with slogans, developed a short list of attributes, and with the help of the group of experts, came up with three critical factors that lead to high student performance: "the plan," engagement in the curriculum, and the ability to adjust to constant change. The mystery remained, however, as to the dynamics in these schools that transformed good intentions into reality. If we had encountered one reform model duplicated in our sample of schools, then it could be said that "this model leads to high achievement." But we found many kinds of innovative models as well as very traditional schools. The key dynamic was not so much an innovative model or adherence to tradition, but effective principals that made innovation or tradition work in their schools.

CHAPTER IV HIGH-PERFORMING PRINCIPALS

All experts acknowledged, directly and indirectly, that high-achieving schools cannot be brought about by a school planning committee or teachers--the principal is key, even if the instructional leader is someone else. The titular "leader" sets the tone and atmosphere of the school, even if the principal works in partnership with another individual or very collaboratively with the school planning committee. In four of the schools, the interview with the principal also included another individual who was identified by the principal as a "working partner," in three instances an assistant principal and in another the school's UFT Chapter leader. In two other schools that were among the most collaborative and innovative, key members of the school planning committee were also present at the interview with the principal and answered several of the questions.

EPP Monitoring Committee members attempted to get a sense of the school atmosphere created by these principals as well as a sense of their priorities. How did they succeed in moving beyond slogans and put these ideals into operation?

A recognition that people "live" in the school One expert finally encapsulated for us and put into words an "atmosphere" and "attitude" we had encountered in most of the schools we visited. At first, we chalked it up to "pride in the school's success," but it seemed more personal than this. The principals seemed to be in love with their buildings, even if they were old, small and cramped or 1950's "modern." We got a clue to what this meant when we asked this expert about whether "the work ethic" and "lots of books" were important attributes:

> "It means that the principal sees the school as a place. I mean, you live at home. The kids live at home, all the staff live in their homes. But we live in the school also. The principals of high-achieving schools understand this, so they strive to make the school a decent place to live, even when they don't succeed in getting all the repairs done that they want. They want it nice for their staff and their students...Materials are a clear indication. They show time and attention. Some schools I visit have a $12,000 Xerox machine in the principal's office, but there's nothing else in the school. In high-achieving schools having enough books is not an issue. How can you even begin to think about standards when you don't have workbooks and books? It even means soap--all the environmental things.
>
> The primary thing is for the principal to be engaged in his school. There is not a high-achieving school where the staff isn't serious about their work and where they're not focused. You can sense that people in a building are moving in the same direction. Everybody knows their job and why they're there...even the lunch room aide. In low-achieving schools, everyone is an island unto themselves."

Earlier in this report, it was mentioned that all the school aides at the door were courteous and efficient when we made site visits. Indeed, this turned out to be an indication that "everybody knows their job and why they're there." Were there similarities we could identify in all the principals' interview responses that could account for the resulting high performance of school staff?

Patterns in the management of instruction in these high-achieving schools The most common self-characterization of the principals interviewed was "educational leader" or "manager of instruction," though "motivator" was used by one principal and two others considered themselves "managers" without a qualifier. Several discussed, without prompting, the debate about whether principals are managers or instructional leaders. This response was fairly representative, though more blunt than most:

> "Even though we're in a time of leadership teams, you better know what's happening in your building and you better be a master teacher. And you better not be a manager. God, I resent all the time-consuming meeting sessions with _________ company managers. In my opinion, half of them didn't strike me as particularly good managers anyway. 75% of a principal's job is to be an educational leader. 25% is a constant sending of paper. By sending us all this paper all the time, they're trying to shift the balance. Then what do you get? A good handler of paper? Is this what they want? If you don't know instruction, you cannot be a manager of a school. It's that simple."

Given that there are so many equally important components of instructional management and only one principal in charge of the school, what were their priorities in the way these principals managed their school? As managers of instruction, "the plan" or "the vision" was viewed as primary, as discussed in the previous chapter. This came out more clearly when asked to list the common mistakes of poorly performing principals. "Pulled in too many directions," "lack of focus," "too many planning committees," and "overwhelmed with the details" were frequent responses. On the other hand, through all of the interviews, principals described their own battle in choosing among competing priorities. Several suggested that new principals should focus on only a limited set of goals (one said only two at most) that were winnable because on most days the sheer volume of problems that presented themselves would leave little time to move forward. One principal said, "Be prepared to face situations daily. Even with a plan, you'll never get to complete it." This problem, of being on top of the details but maintaining focus, faces most managers in any institution.

While the principals mentioned a multitude of successful strategies at work in their schools and a multitude of needed education reforms, the interviews reveal a fairly short list of what a majority, if not all, principals felt were their most important tasks in managing instruction:

Creating or establishing the school's curriculum Unlike the turnaround schools studied earlier, issues like alignment of subject matter and instructional approaches among grades and across grades was not mentioned as a current problem by thirteen of the fourteen principals. This is not to say that numerous curriculum problems weren't identified. The most common one was that during the period the interviews were being conducted, some complained of the low quality of most textbooks, which they felt had been "dumbed down" and even had the facts wrong if read carefully. Several principals, especially those from more traditional schools, complained that the school system no longer had a standard curriculum. "Everyone is talking about new standards. But there is no news! Haven't you noticed? We only have tests! There is no curriculum left!" Many of the principals we encountered, even in the more traditional schools, were risk takers when it came to curriculum, though careful ones. Either at the behest of the district superintendent or because of their relationship to textbook sales representatives, many of these schools had pilot-tested a new textbook series, a student test, or a new instructional methodology.

Teacher selection and new teacher support Many principals stated that hiring was the most important set of decisions that they made, but two also stated that they were not quite confident that they always made the best decisions. What confounded EPP Monitoring Committee members was the range of different attributes that were sought in new teachers, though a major in education and student teaching experience ranked highest along with "caring for children." Some wanted high motivation and commitment while others wanted a good rounded educational background because elementary teachers are generalists. Several mentioned "stage presence" in front of the classroom and, in the more traditional schools, "stern but caring." The degree to which principals observe and marshal support for new teachers was consistent throughout all the schools in this study and is detailed in the next two chapters. As part of their attention to teacher staffing, some principals take extra measures to "protect" their schools from unwanted teachers. Because several are located in districts with many low-performing schools which were in the process of "reorganization," large numbers of teachers who lost their jobs at these schools were now eligible to transfer to other schools in the district, including these high-performing schools. Most principals also did not welcome teachers they called "UFT transfers," and took measures to dissuade them from coming to their school. Because of the sensitivity of these issues, they did not provide enough details for us to understand how they managed to prevent these "UFT" or "reorganization" transfers.

Observation of the *execution* of teachers' lesson plans and staff development *in the classroom* Most principals stated that when they go into a classroom, they want to see the teacher's lesson plans on the desk. One principal has teachers make formal observations of other teachers, including a review of lesson plan execution. This principal along with others developed their own unit tests to help teachers assess if they had succeeded in getting several weeks of lessons across to the students. As discussed in the next chapter, constant classroom visits were cited by all principals as their main function.

Selling ideas, excitement, and commitment One expert told us, "Good principals are very good dramatizers. They make a big deal out of the routine. They can make improving student attendance seem like a life or death matter." What struck us is that these high-performing principals were communicating to three different audiences, staff, students, and parents. One principal told us, "Good principals never talk to individuals, but to the group." He added an important proviso in that the communication had to be consistent. Another principal said, "I'm a good salesperson. I'm very 'out there'...I translate what I learn at various conferences into positive pieces that I can bring back. I excite my staff with my enthusiasm. I sell the new idea to staff and parents." The principals we talked to seemed singularly successful in "imaging," that is, verbalizing a vision of the school and the student during the interview. It did not escape the attention of EPP Monitoring Committee members that even the two principals who made derogatory remarks about school mission statements left the interviewers with a very strong idea of their own vision for their schools and their students. As described in a later chapter, some principals had created very comprehensive motivation systems which took "the selling of ideas" to a new level that we hadn't observed before in any other schools.

Setting the agenda, directly or indirectly, for the school planning committee In the eleven schools that had fully functioning planning committees, the responses to questions by principals were pretty uniform. Though the principals often described their role as "just a member of the committee," follow-up questions revealed that they tended to provide the direction. One principal stated that his school practiced "guided" shared decision making. The key decision maker remains the principal, even in the most collaborative schools. Here again, the answers were uniform. "I make the final decisions because I'm the only one who is responsible for them." Some answers were more colorful. "The committee allows me to make the ultimate decisions because I'm the only one who can be led out in handcuffs if we're wrong." As in EPP's previous study on turnaround schools, the most commonly cited benefit was "staff buy in" and "ownership" of the school's direction.

Orderly school and orderly school day Almost all the principals mentioned "order," but half of them put considerable stress on order as the most important precondition for good instruction and high student achievement. One principal told us that she had only two goals, order and quality instruction. Frequently, they also expressed their success in maintaining order as one of the ways they provided support to teachers. Possibly these lectures were for the benefit of interviewers whom they suspected of being idealistic education reform advocates unconcerned with this task of school managers.

Other aspects of management were touched upon that were not task oriented, but constituted an approach to how principals related to their various constituencies.

Avoiding "festering" and "favoritism" In the question about advice that they would give to a new principal, many of the respondents warned that the school leader should treat all teachers, students, and parents even-handedly and avoid developing "pets." One principal put it succinctly: "I've got favorites. They are the ones who work their heads off on behalf of the kids...Anyone could become my favorite." Yet another principal said, "Try to discern the difference between people who are trying to butter you up and those who are hard workers. Capitalize on hard workers." One expert also focused on the negative impact of favoritism:

> The principal knows what is going on in every room in the building. If they don't know about class Y on the third floor -- are they visiting only part of the building, the teachers they like?...In low-achieving schools everyone is an island to themselves. But in many schools there are pockets of people that are neglected for whatever reason.

Several characterized low-performing principals as those who divide their staff members and take sides when there are cliques in the school. One principal called it "the blame game." On the other hand, "being too accessible" or "having too many friends" was also cited as a failing. One principal told us that the hardest thing she has to do is find a balance between being accessible and focusing on her objectives. Another principal said, "Low-performing principals have too many friends. Be cordial. But understand that when the chips are down, you're all alone."

Codes of caring and respect, and for some principals, being a change agent and developing leadership in teachers One of our experts explained why it was important for principals to be passionate and also gave us a clue as to why some very "top down" principals succeed:

> "The principal has to express care for the students. Teachers need this reinforcement and to know that someone else besides themselves care about the students. They will go along with a crazy principal that makes them half-nuts and is not fun to work with, so long as they get a sense that the principal thinks that students are important and what they do as teachers is important."

Throughout all the interviews, principals mentioned respectful treatment of teachers as part of the reason why the school ran smoothly, though "respect" was also mentioned as a rationale for clearly articulated rules for students, for parents and for teacher contacts with parents. One said:

> "Sell the program to the teachers. Bring them in. Being a supervisor is 2% fear. Respect them, and make them part of everything that goes on. When I came into this school, I didn't know anything about teaching elementary school. Listen to your teachers. Treat them as colleagues."

The open question, however, is how many of the eight principals who reported that they had turned around a formerly low-performing school had encountered resistance. One principal stated at one point in the interview that he was met with some hostility in his efforts at reform and that at the beginning he had been called "Mussolini" on more than one occasion. Here is his description of how he brought about change:

> "We had homogeneous grouping... I took my best teacher and sent her for training...I gave her the "top" class in her grade. These students became very successful...I then selected two other teachers. It worked. The teachers did not accept heterogeneous groups in the first year. By the third year, they led the way."

Another principal, responding to one of several questions about the reasons for the school's success, finally stated "my pig-headedness." Only one of these schools had been placed on the formal list of low-performing schools, so these principals did not have State Education Department staff or the threat of "reorganization" to help spur change, and yet they succeeded. By setting higher expectations, creating a focus on learning, and establishing a climate of professional respect, these principals succeeded in motivating the informal network of teachers to try out new instructional approaches. One principal called himself a "teacher opportunist." In innovative schools there was an explicit emphasis on leadership by teachers. In traditional schools that were moving in the direction of trying new instructional methods, principals also mentioned the development of leadership among teachers as an important strategy.

As the next chapters will attempt to show, the EPP Monitoring Committee has identified two dynamics in these schools that encourage higher levels of staff and student performance as well as parental support. First, in both innovative and traditional schools, the instructional performance of teachers was made "public." Second, the principals' "follow-up" was based on an implied agreement about mutual responsibility.

CHAPTER V THE TRANSPARENT SCHOOL BUILDING

In both innovative and traditional schools, principal *and* teacher observation of classroom performance is a dynamic that transforms statements like "high expectations" or "focus on learning" into actual practices. But peer pressure among teachers to "fit in" is as strong an element as a "walk-around" principal. In most schools, we found evidence of both in our interviews.

The open classroom door The sheer range of hiring objectives, methods, and school cultures made it impossible for us to find out if there is "the right" formula for hiring teachers or the "magic" curriculum. Yet a close reading of the interview responses showed one consistent pattern in twelve schools in our sample. In these schools, teachers did not go into their classrooms to work in isolation. We found that both "collaborative" and "top down" principals visited classrooms throughout the day and that these classroom visits were routine and expected. Sometimes this pattern wasn't so clear. For example, the principal we called "the delegator" said towards the beginning of the interview, "I'm nice to the teachers and to the kids. I don't look over their shoulders." But later on in the interview, asked to describe new teachers, he said,

> "We train them. The district office offers teacher training. I do in-school observations. I pull at least one person out almost every day. These are not necessarily the new teachers."

When we were still looking for "the formula" for hiring, another principal's response was disconcerting:

> "I am not that good at hiring. People look good in the interviews and then they don't perform...We have new teachers from Columbia and NYU. We monitor how well they do, we just don't assume they're doing fine. After the first month of school I'm in their classrooms all the time.

A principal of a school that was particularly innovative, after having described the school's commitment to a specific teaching method, said:

> "I'm always in the classroom, in the morning and in the afternoon. I'm in the lunchroom all the time. I walk the hallways and am in the classroom every five minutes, every five minutes. I do it so often that it becomes second nature."

Given the wide variety of approaches to instruction, school principals varied considerably in terms of the behaviors they were seeking. One wanted to see small group work at all times and to see whether the "grade plan" (based on themes) was being executed, while another told us she wanted to see her system in place with the teacher "teaching to the class." Notably, in two very traditional schools where the principals would seem furthest away from innovative practices of evaluating every child for strengths and weaknesses, we found a surprising focus on individual students . We observed one traditional principal doing her classroom observation. She explained afterwards:

> "I'm not in the corner watching the teacher--I'm all over the classroom. I'm like an ant. I'm all over the classroom looking at how the children are writing their reports or what page they're on. I want verbalization in class, getting the children to answer questions whether they're right or wrong."

The second tradition-oriented principal played close attention to how many students in each class were reaching the goal of reading 25 books. Practice tests were given and every teacher was given individual feedback on the test from the principal. Even where individualized learning strategies for students are not emphasized, a strong component of teacher evaluation is based on individual student progress.

There was also a consistency in the principals' answers to the question about lesson plans. A few principals bridled at the fact that the 1991 UFT contract prohibited them from collecting lesson plans, but almost all of them said that they were far more interested in how the teachers were executing lesson plans in the classroom than in reviewing lesson plans in their offices. Many, like the following principal, require that lesson plans be visible on the teacher's desk:

> "When I walk into the room, the plan must be on the desk and visible. If I see a weakness in what's happening in the classroom, then the lesson plan becomes something I focus on and then I have a right to see it. I don't violate the UFT contract, but if the lesson plan is an issue, I have a right to see where it can be strengthened."

Only one principal stressed formal evaluations, which he believed was a tool that was not used well by most principals. The EPP Monitoring Committee had hopes that we would find other principals with a similar approach. Instead, we found that all the other principals stated that since they were in and out of classrooms all the time, they did not put much effort into a "formal" evaluation process. One principal never did evaluations:

> "I don't do evaluations of teachers. When I started, I'd go into their rooms and fireworks would go off. Sometimes they even lost the kids, they were so focused on putting on a show. It was really a waste of time for me. So the teachers evaluate each other. They go into each other's classrooms and write each other up. It gives them a sense of professionalism. But I focus on whether the teachers act on what they say."

The teachers also "walk around" In the innovative schools, the culture is explicitly built around constant communication and shared planning among teachers. In a school that has been following the Comer model for a decade, the principal summarized why this model worked in her school. "A good staff is essential. Knowledgeable people are in charge of getting information to the people who need it. Everyone assumes responsibility, parents, students, administrators, and other staff." Another principal of an innovative school, following another model, said,

> "We believe in teacher leadership. I create the framework, but the teachers learn more from each other. The informal network is more important than and more powerful than the formal one."

Several years ago this school became an Options school, which released the staff from following some of the requirements of the UFT collective bargaining contract. As a result, the school now has a personnel committee that does the hiring. According to the principal, "It has become wildly successful. Teachers want to volunteer for the personnel committee. The teachers are more critical of the applicants than I am." While new teachers are assigned to a staff developer and grants pay for college courses for selected teachers, the principal said, "Everyone here considers themselves to be a staff developer and considers it their responsibility to work with new teachers." After our school site visit, this principal was going to call for "an in-school bilingual summit" to talk about how to deliver the curriculum to Limited English Proficient students.

In another innovative Options school that also hires its own teachers through a personnel committee made up of a majority of teachers, the UFT Chapter leader said, "We usually see if they fit into our school community. Teachers who work in this school put in much more time and creativity than teachers in the suburbs." Questionnaires are particularly important in this school. The one that goes to teachers asks them "What can we do to improve education for children?" Planning is by grade and the grades are divided into three larger planning units for early, middle and higher elementary grades. Each unit has a theme. The questionnaire responses are used as the basis for unit planning and to choose the topics for staff development workshops. In addition, teachers do self-assessment and choose goals to achieve by the end of the year. This self-assessment is shared.

We found that in some of the traditional schools we visited where the word "collaboration" is not highly valued, there is still a culture where teachers routinely see the work of other teacher's students. In traditional schools, literary magazines, committees to select award-winning essays, regularly scheduled plays and assemblies are all elements of building a culture where teachers are regularly exposed to the performance level of students in other classes. Here is how one principal and the UFT Chapter leader in one traditional school explained how their emphasis on "rules" works:

> The principal: "The policy here is structured help. When [new staff] get here, they get training. We tell them to work with the senior teacher in their grade. They attend all the meetings of the grade. They are fortunate. They are coming into a building where everything is known. Expectations. We don't leave teachers alone here. We bond with a weak teacher...We quickly tell teachers here that our children are not genetically different in this school."
>
> UFT Chapter leader: "Everybody knows what is going on. We help one another...Every Wednesday afternoon at our cabinet meeting, and whenever we have to, we discuss everything. We also try to get at all the issues at the UFT Chapter meeting. Nothing festers here...We know who is good, who is bad. We know who is a good teacher. We observe. You have to have hard workers here."

CHAPTER VI THE IMPLIED CONTRACT AND FOLLOW UP

The implied contract Lots of principals and teachers mentioned "follow through" or "we do what we say" as an important aspect of their school culture and reason for the school's success. One principal's advice to a new principal was "Delegating is fine, but you must know what is going on. You must follow up. This goes to the heart of it." But there was a special type of "follow up" in these schools. Through their answers to our interview questions, almost all principals would mention three core expectations:

> **#1** In return for support, teachers are expected to perform;
>
> **#2** In return for providing their children with a good education, parents are expected to back up the school;
>
> **#3** In return for doing their class and home assignments, children are recognized for their efforts.

All of these expectations are norms that are prevalent throughout the public school system. What is particularly striking about the interview responses is that these norms are made explicit without the slightest bit of embarrassment or hesitation and presented as a contractual commitment. Observation therefore involves a measurement against a standard.

In some schools, especially those in what we deemed the poorest neighborhoods, the communication style of staff members was almost confrontational in a friendly, street-smart New York way. There was a "show me" attitude and a communication style that was direct, honest, and unambiguous. These principals tended to favor hiring teachers who were "stern, but caring," which seemed to describe their own personality profile as well. As interviewers, we were questioned closely about our project, our organization, and our questionnaire, but they ended up sharing with virtual strangers what they valued and some of their deepest concerns as professionals. Even in schools where staff members were not as confrontational, the communication style was direct and up front. We were given many examples of how often "follow up" was based on expectations of performance. One blunt principal put it this way:

> "I do not avoid confrontation, either with teachers or with parents. Tell the truth! I see what the teachers are doing and I tell them the truth -- not what they want to hear. I'll never embarrass a teacher in front of her classroom. Never! But I'll tell that teacher outside the classroom what I see and what she can do to improve. I don't hold back! I tell them the truth! That's also what I tell the teachers to do with parents -- don't hold back, tell them how their children are doing, how they're *really* doing. Don't say 'Everything is fine,' when it isn't."

Another principal, in the school where "the cabinet" had produced a manual, said,

> "We have a policy on everything. Like how you blow your nose. We have a form for everything. We have a form letter for everything. I don't want a teacher saying the wrong

> thing. Don't come in and tell me that the child did not do homework for three days and you didn't send out a letter."

While the interviews showed a different level of emphasis in each school, or at least with every principal, most interviews in these schools revealed clear expectations for parents and students, as well as teachers. The "implied contract" with teachers, however, showed more variation and detail than those with students and parents.

Teachers: Are we doing what we say we're doing? The innovative schools, in particular, had a more formalized process for assessing and reflecting on their practice. Just as important as proclaiming success, there was a felt need to ferret out where there were weaknesses. In one very innovative school, where the principal stated that "the rich get richer" by constantly analyzing how students could make even greater progress, outside staff developers were explicitly asked to come to the school to tell the principal and the staff where they saw weaknesses in classroom practices. In other innovative schools, questionnaires and "summits" were other processes used by school staff to assess the schools' weaknesses. Several schools, both innovative and traditional, had gone through the "PASS process," shorthand for a Board of Education quality review exercise called "Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide - Essential Elements of Exemplary Schools." The principals found it a very worthwhile exercise in identifying the direction of the school, where the staff had succeeded, and where extra effort was needed.

But even in innovative schools, "follow through" was achieved primarily through both positive and negative feedback by the principal. The principals not only "walked around" but also continuously communicated what they liked as well as what they didn't like. One principal gave us a quick example of what he does when he visits the classroom, "I ordered the manipulatives you wanted, but I don't see you using them." Some principals stated that both positive and negative comments were often followed up in writing:

> "I document everything...One person last year (not a teacher) started working here and figured out the school right away--she got herself out of here fast. The good ones stay. You have to write them up. I document everything. But I also compliment them. I motivate them at staff meetings through pep talks and letters of appreciation. Since we can't reward them with extra money, the letters are very important. I motivate through good and bad letters."

Creating the partnership with parents: Your child will be at grade level if you do your part. Good relations with parents were not viewed as an end goal, but only a means of reaching a goal. Several principals were particularly derogatory about low-performing schools with cliques of "pet" parents unconcerned about their children's poor education. Three principals told that they believed in "assertive discipline," and were not shy about urging parents to adopt this policy in the home. In most of these schools, especially those that were the highest achieving, the principals, teachers, and parents reported a working relationship based on an explicit understanding that if the parents "follow through," their children will be well educated. One principal talked about the need for a "conspiracy" between school staff and parents to get children to learn. The interviews are replete with statements that "parents value this school because they know we're good," or "the parents know they are lucky that their children are here.

they know that this school is better than most public schools, so they go along with the program." One principal related to us his standards pitch: "This school runs very, very well. In five years, your child could be above grade level. If a kid continues with us, you have to work with us." The "conversation" with parents, in other words, is about "learning."

We visited schools with exemplary parent participation programs and others with a barely functioning parents association. One school went so far as to have two 7:30 am meetings twice a week to plan activities. At the other extreme, in two schools the principals said virtually the same thing, "When I need parents I just pull them in." On the other hand, almost all of these schools offered parents 1) clear communication about their academic programs and the skills and materials the children had to master at each grade and 2) an assertive attitude that parents were not a passive constituency but had to do their part in ensuring good student performance. Most of these principals were not the slightest bit shy in outlining in very clear detail what the parents had to do in order to keep "their side of the bargain." One principal called it "parent accountability."

Almost all of these schools, whatever the culture, offered a presentation on the curriculum to parents in September. The most impressive outreach was by principals who focused on kindergarten parents. Our experts agreed that effective principals pay special attention to parents of the entering grade of their school in order to set the tone for future relations. These two principals went beyond "setting the tone," and actually outlined to parents in the spring what they needed to do over the summer with their children so that they would be prepared for kindergarten in the fall. This guide to kindergarten parents was the best example of a clear, unambiguous attitude in all of these schools that parents *must* help out so that their children can perform well in school. The key dynamic was honest communication, as one expert put it:

> "Usually there is a lot of hostility in communications between school staff and parents. Frankly, there are no communications -- it's like yelling across the fence. The communications have to be real. In some schools there are 'the official parents,' but most parents are ignored unless they cause problems. Parents welcome involvement, especially in helping their own kids. Parent meetings should be like college, where there is an orientation. It means making an extra effort. It's not just a relationship with a few good parents. Schools can put out a slick newsletter, but parents can figure out what's real and what isn't. The activities have got to be clear and they have to be concrete."

Noteworthy was the degree and speed of follow-up required of teachers in their communication with parents and, in some schools, the consequences to parents if their child began not turning in assignments. Several schools required parents or guardians to come in person to pick up report cards, others required that the parent sign homework or keep a log of books read. The emphasis in most schools was not to delay follow-up with parents who had not shown up, had not signed the homework or were not keeping reading logs. Parents in one innovative school were told that the policy of the school was to hold back children in first grade if the children did not seem ready for promotion, a policy that is becoming very common in suburban schools. In several schools, parents were called in at the first sign that their children were in trouble academically. One principal described these meetings:

> "When the child is falling behind, I see the parent. I say, 'How come your child is so far behind?' I put the onus on them. 'What are you doing for your child?' The role of the parents is to back up the school--make the child understand that the parent will not tolerate the fact that child not doing well."

In this school, teachers were required to report a drop in student performance to the principal on a regular basis, so the principal had several of these meetings a week. The parent leaders we consulted told us that this was very unusual behavior. Said one, "Mostly, parents don't know their children are having difficulty until their child has to do a grade over."

Students: Lots of recognition, lots of rewards, and a promise of a bright future. All of the school interviews contained phrases to the effect that students behave "because it's expected here." One principal explained his technique: "It's the little things. When a child breaks the rules, I make a big project out of it. Everything has its stages. The child gets to understand the atmosphere here." But all schools reported positive rewards as their key strategy. In many schools, particularly those that are low-performing, the students that get the most attention are those who cause the most problems. In high achieving schools, the emphasis has shifted to providing the most attention to students who, in most instances, cause the fewest problems.

While all schools made their emphasis on academic achievement clear to students, six schools had well-developed systems for positive recognition for students (and, indirectly for their parents) that provided constant and visible reinforcement for good academic performance. Our experts interpreted our reports of the multitude of contests, prizes, and assemblies in these high-performing schools as indicators of "extra effort and attention." Others attributed this behavior as an attempt to copy the successful practices of Attendance Improvement/ Dropout Prevention programs. On this one point, the EPP Monitoring Committee differed with most of the experts' opinions. Several of these schools had more highly developed motivational systems for student academic performance than members of the EPP Monitoring Committee have ever seen in any other set of schools.

One principal's system was particularly noteworthy. In this school, parents registering their children for kindergarten were given a two-page list of 30 questions to answer. For example: could the children write their names; did they know their home addresses and basic colors and shapes; could they count to 20; and could recognize simple words, like "boy" and "go." The result is that five-year olds who arrive in September have already covered the basic kindergarten curriculum at home. In kindergarten and first grade, any student who can read a whole book is invited to read for the principal. Upon his assessment that the child is reading (and not memorizing), the child is given two certificates (one for the child and one for the parent) and a button stating that the student is a member of the "Principal's Reading Club." Students in the second to fifth grades can join this club upon completion of five book reports (with spelling and grammar errors corrected), and a button and the certificates are presented to the child in the classroom. The pictures of all club members are put on a bulletin board outside the school office. Students who are in "the Club" are asked to wear their buttons daily.

In another school, the reward system uses rocket ships, each one representing a class in the school. As students begin on their quest of reading twenty-five books, the class rocket ship begins moving vertically, then it "lifts off," moves up, and then "reaches the stars" when at least 90% of the students in the class have read twenty-five books. In this school, before classes begin, students are in the auditorium reading silently. Sixth grade student monitors help out the kindergarten students. There is another ten minutes of silent reading before lunch. If the silence is broken, there is no recess. Another system calls for classes that score ten points at the end of the month to get ice cream and extra recess. In one school, all students who do well on the practice reading tests are eligible for "bonus" gym. One school has a monthly essay contest, and the winners are given prizes at general assembly. Another has a multitude of contests, which were described by the principals as "my own thing -- contests have been going on forever. Kids win something. We cover literature to phonics, Game 24 (math game), Mathathon, Readathon, Spelling, Pushathon, and each class puts on plays during the school year." This principal particularly focused on improving attendance, so students in any class with 100% attendance got a "100% bagel breakfast." One day, he had to haul hundreds of bagels to the school in his car to reward every student, since all of the children had shown up. This school, like most of the other schools with an emphasis on a student reward system, had a "store" run and managed by students in the highest grade. This school sold snacks. Two other schools had "book stores," while a third had a student-run literary journal. Student leadership in the fifth school was recognized by making the highest grade students monitors of kindergarten students during "silent reading," which meant that these students read to them in quiet tones.

A side benefit of these student contests is that it tends to motivate teacher performance. The visibility of student achievement makes each teacher's performance more visible to the principal and the larger school community. There is a risk of public embarrassment if few students in a teacher's class fail to become a member of the "Principal's Reading Club" or if the rocket ship on the bulletin board does not "lift off." In fact, in the school with the "Reading Club," teachers had to identify how many students were in "the Club" on a monthly basis. In one innovative school, the principal has entered into a friendly competition with a guidance counselor and staff developer. Each of them takes a group of ten underachieving students for one period twice a week for the entire school year. The groups compete with each other for various rewards. The group of students that show the most improvement are taken to McDonalds. This friendly competition keeps out-of-classroom staff engaged in teaching and communicates to those working in the classroom that the academic performance levels of even "hopeless" students can be improved.

CHAPTER VII CHALLENGES TO HIGHER LEVELS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Several questions in the interview were designed to elicit answers as to what principals felt were impediments to their and their school's performance. A majority of the principals mentioned a lack of resources, not enough assistant principals and office staff, too much bureaucracy and paperwork, collective bargaining restraints on what they could ask teachers to do, and not enough time left in their ten to twelve hour days to get all their tasks done. To our surprise, only a minority of the principals in these open-ended questions mentioned poorly trained teachers.

Salary levels were a key resource issue. Higher teacher salaries in suburban school districts was frequently mentioned as a problem in hiring and retaining teachers. Almost all principals also made reference to the fact that in the 1999-2000 school year the starting salary for supervisors will be lower than that of teachers with the highest seniority and extra education course credits. Dissatisfaction with their low salary levels was universal and many references were made to the unwillingness of teachers to consider supervisory positions and unwillingness of assistant principals to become principals. At the onset of this study, Monitoring Committee members were aware that the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, the principals' collective bargaining unit, had been unable to secure a contract agreement with the city because the union would not relinquish the right of principals to tenure. As this report is being written, a battle is being waged in the state legislature to repeal the section of Education Law granting tenure to principals after a five-year probationary period.

Given this backdrop of tension between the principals' union and the Board of Education, the majority of these fourteen principals we interviewed were remarkably positive and most could be characterized as "high morale." This characterization should be understood as qualified. As a group, these principals tended to have driven personalities. They freely expressed complaints about the system and frustrations about what they had been unable to achieve in their schools. Some of the system-wide issues they raised and how these issues may affect efforts to expand the numbers of high-achieving schools are described in the Discussion and Recommendations section of this report.

The Monitoring Committee's task was to analyze principals' complaints about lack of resources to find out how this affected their schools. Though many principals during the course of the interview alluded to increased funding in recent years after a five-year period of retrenchment, all but one stated that a lack of resources posed a serious problem. Asked at one point to identify three problems that made raising student achievement more difficult, principals ranked "lack of resources" first and ahead of "too much bureaucracy and rules."

As usual in EPP's monitoring studies of schools, responses on budget questions have posed difficulties in interpreting responses. For example, one principal who complained about underfunding, when asked what problems were caused by this, answered, "Our biggest problem is not having enough money to do all the things we want." This is a problem for most organizations. In our 1996 study of turnaround schools, few of the principals gave consistent answers to budget questions. For this reason, the EPP Monitoring Committee asked additional direct and open-ended questions in order to assess the impact of underfunding. We were surprised to find out that our analysis of principal responses, including the one that said that "money isn't the problem," showed a consistent pattern: from their point of view, lack of funding translated into inadequate staffing and, almost as important, even small funding issues, such as lack of money for supplies, resulted in an added drain on principals' limited time. The assessment by principals of the impact of these resource problems was also similar: they felt that the instructional quality of the school was lowered.

Inadequate staffing One principal put her problem succinctly: "Personnel is the most difficult thing to get through the BOE. Other things, like materials, with persistence, I can get." Several principals mentioned that their schools had once been recipients of Library Power grants, funded by the Dewitt Wallace Foundation, but that they became ineligible for a continuation of the grants because they no longer had funding for a full-time librarian. Among our small sample of schools, there were three clear staffing priorities if more funding for school-site positions were to become available, 1) more assistant principals and office staff and 2) more teachers so class sizes could be reduced, and 3) more counselors for general education students and other professional staff, such as full-time librarians.

Supervisory support The smaller schools with less than 500 students did not have assistant principals, but beyond this pattern we found that the staffing of supervisory positions was not consistent with the size of student enrollment for reasons we do not fully understand. For example, one elementary school of 665 students had two assistant principals, but a school in the same district with 640 students and two other schools in other districts with close to 700 and 850 students had only one assistant principal per school. One of these principals, who was functioning with only one assistant principal and no staff developer, stated:

> "We need at least two AP's and one out-of-classroom person. It's unconscionable. We don't have enough help. The UFT--what teachers can do and have to do is very clearly outlined. That's not true for us. We get to do everything with not enough staff."

As mentioned earlier, in several schools we found that the principal and the assistant principal worked as a team, and in most of the remaining schools assistant principals were viewed as assets to the functioning of the school. But in two schools where the principals paid considerable attention to teacher performance, we found that they had assistant principals whom they could not remove, even though the principal judged their performance to be poor. Because of the sensitivity of these issues, we were not given explanations of why they could not be removed.

Office staff also seemed to be a critical need. As one principal put it, "Somebody has to do the filing around here." Another principal trained part-time aides in basic clerical skills, such as filing, and assigned them to do phone follow-up work, though they had no previous office experience. This training, however, took time.

Smaller class sizes The need to reduce average class sizes was listed as a priority, though not as frequently as the need for more supervisory support. Principals stated that smaller classes would increase student achievement and allow teachers to give more individual attention to students.

But two principals who wanted smaller classes added that their schools' current overcrowding made this impossible. Other objectives for class size reductions were more targeted. For example, one principal said, "We had a fourth grade this year where the classes were 38 and 39 students. Now this will be the size of our fifth grade. If they lowered class size those students would do better."

Counseling and other professional staff Several mentioned the need to have a full-time guidance counselor for general education students in their elementary school. The absence of this staff often means that, by default, the principal becomes the counselor. Here is a typical comment:

> "The children come with such mixed-up home lives they are really a mess. The problem is that the counselors we have are special education and they have a full program. So that is what I would hire--a counselor that is not programmed. I and the AP spend our day with this kid and that kid with problems. We do it because there is nobody to do it, so we do it, but it really cuts into our work time, let me tell you."

Others mentioned a full-time staff developer or the availability of substitute teachers so that their instructional staff could attend staff development sessions during the day, either in school or at a conference. Other priorities were full-time librarians and teachers in the arts, whom one principal called "specialists."

Added stress and hours because of the lack of small amounts of money One principal attributed a lack of funding to his inability to find time to reflect on his performance because he was always having to solve one minor crisis after another created by lack of funding. The EPP Monitoring Committee was surprised by how often principals mentioned a lack of funding for supplies, most notably paper and ink cartridges for computer printers, and a lack of funding for books. Principals expressed resentment at having to solve these problems as well as having to negotiate a cumbersome purchasing process. These are a sample of representative statements:

> "I don't know how much money I get, because I get the money in terms of positions. My biggest problem is supplies."
>
> "Our biggest problem is paper and ink. We go through a lot of ink and paper. All teachers pool "Teachers' Choice" and buy one case of paper each... so we get a total of 50 cases. But we still need more paper."
>
> "I don't have enough money for books. I need $100,000 for textbooks. We only received $40,000."

A few principals cited another "time problem" associated with funding, but there is a possibility that they were merely being more candid than other respondents or, on the other hand, were in community school districts where the superintendent had a greater tendency to use "the power of the purse" as leverage with principals. This handful of principals reported that they had to spend a lot of time at the superintendent's office "begging" or "dancing for dollars" to get programs, positions, or extra pots of small funds. Said one: "The system does not allow us to access funds when we need them. It's a real effort to get the money. The system discourages initiative." Another said, "The answer is to allow principals and staff to take on a true role in decision making and allocation of funds instead of having to dance for dollars at the D.O. [community school district office]."

Will school-based budgeting provide flexibility? The Board of Education's official name for its two-year old initiative is "Performance-Driven Budgeting." It is designed to allow greater discretion to community school districts and schools in the use of funding. Members of the EPP Monitoring Committee were particularly interested in learning about principal attitudes toward having greater budget discretion and, if their school was in a pilot project, their experiences. We were also aware that, in general, most elementary school principals have less knowledge of how funds are budgeted, because they receive funding primarily for staff positions. Principals of high schools, on the other hand, receive much of their school funding on the basis of "Teacher Units" that are based on student enrollment formulas and have more flexibility in using these "Teacher Units." We found that half of our sample of schools had been chosen to pilot Performance-Driven budgeting and half had not. The comments of those who had not yet participated ranged from the positive ("Give me the money!" "Yes, I'd get more personnel!") to the pessimistic:

> "I don't like it. I don't see the advantage to it. Under school-based budgeting, I do not have complete autonomy. There are still the rules. Just give me the money. If I could control my own budget, I might change some mandates."

> "I don't know. Right now everything is mandated. If there were no regs, then fine. But it sounds like I'll just have to do extra work by building a budget to pay for the things that are already paid for."

Principals who were already in the new school-based budgeting system reported a mix of experiences. Of the five principals with positive reports, two stated that their districts' budgeting systems were already flexible and that they did not see that much difference, even though they were in a special pilot program. A third saw no difference between school-based budgeting and the decisions she already made in the use of federal Title I and state PCEN funds. One of the two principals with negative experiences stated that her district had essentially been ahead of other districts in the city in allowing schools to make their own decision, and that, ironically, the pilot project "made everything more complicated for us. The program has not been operational." The second principal's complaint was more serious and was not about "glitches":

> "Yes, this school was part of a pilot project. Last year, we started this thing and the big decision we made was to create this one position. Then I came back in September, and [the district office] said, 'We won't give you the money.' We won. We'll take [school-based budgeting] year by year. That wasn't a good start."

In February 1999, the office of New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi released an assessment, prepared by the KPMG accounting firm, of school-based budgeting along with four other mandates in the 1996 governance reforms for the New York City school district. It describes a process of implementation that has focused on community school district superintendents, but not school-level personnel. For example, all superintendents participated in training in January 1998 on the new budget process and sent an average of six people from the district office. Only eleven districts, on the other hand, sent any school-level personnel for training despite the assumption that school-based budgeting is a "bottom-up approach." The report also noted that there was no system in place for actually verifying that school projects were implemented at the school level. Survey responses from teachers were particularly critical about how the budgetary process was working at the district level. One said:

> "[The] system is not designed to track how the money is being spent. For example, superintendents were allocated funds based on the school priorities as defined in the budget request process. However, superintendent allocations to schools are not clearly tied to the original requests. As a result, [one] cannot track funds. The model seems like it could be good, but [the] process breaks down because there is no feedback loop."

On the whole, the KPMG assessment is complimentary about the Board of Education's performance in meeting the deadlines set by the legislature. EPP's assessment, based on more limited and anecdotal information, is that "Performance-Driven Budgeting" has not been a "bottom-up" approach, but a continuation of the budgetary authority and discretion of community school district superintendents. Since other school districts across the country have indicated that one of their most difficult problems with school-based budgeting has been to evaluate its effectiveness in improving student outcomes, EPP inquired whether the central Board of Education plans to evaluate at least some school-based decisions to see whether their "school improvement" goals were met. EPP was informed that no such plans are underway.

Punishment for performance Another source of frustration for several principals concerned a state funding program for school districts serving high numbers of children who come from low-income families or who do not speak English, called Extraordinary Needs Aid. At the city level this funding stream is still called Pupils With Compensatory Education Needs and is distributed at the discretion of community school superintendents, supposedly on the basis of each school's proportion of students testing in the bottom quartile of test takers and non-English speaking immigrants. Principals complained that since their students were high-performing, PCEN funding was reduced or eliminated entirely. This is what one principal told us:

> "We made the [Chancellor's] Honor Roll. I got only a phone call from a friend in the district who said, 'Get ready to get less.'"

Another principal complained that his PCEN allocation was reduced significantly by the district office so that it could be used to help a nearby low-performing school, which confirmed his view that "the system" rewards failure. This unintended consequence of linking funding to low student performance is precisely why the federal Title I program for schools serving low-income communities was restructured in 1994 so that funding would no longer be based on poor performance but strictly on poverty. The state's Extraordinary Needs Aid program replaced the state PCEN program in 1994 precisely to eliminate the same negative incentive. However, school systems have the option to distribute ENA funding anyway they choose under state education law. The New York City Board of Education has continued to distribute this funding, currently $246 million, among community school districts based on the estimated number of pupils below the Board's academic standards, essentially the bottom quartile of student test takers from grades three to six. High-performing districts get less PCEN funds and high-performing schools get less PCEN funds.

There is another related problem in the allocation of categorical funding. Since many community school districts are reallocating 90% to 100% of PCEN and Title 1 funding to the school level, EPP questions why any district without an ambitious staff development program (such as the one in Community School District 2) needs to appropriate such a large share of categorical funding. In our review of *School Based Expenditure Reports*, we were surprised that in the 1996-97 school year, two of the community school districts where our sample of high-achieving schools are located appropriated 13% to 25% of PCEN funds. In the *Expenditure Reports* for 1997-98, they held back 12% to 8%, respectively, an improvement. However, *School Based Budget Reports* for the 1998-99 school year show that one of these districts planned to appropriate close to 25% of PCEN funds. A comparison of 1996-97 and 1998-99 *Budget Reports* also reveals that the number of community school districts holding back 15% or more of Title 1 funds increased from 6 districts to 17 districts. One of the ironies of the Board of Education's drive to implement school-based budgeting is that the proportion of categorical funds actually reaching the school level seems to be shrinking as districts continue to appropriate ever larger shares of these funds. Traditionally, PCEN and Title 1 funding have been the only area of budgeting where principals have been able to make real budget and staffing decisions.

The impact of a strong teachers' union "They used to be treated like gods," was a common refrain by our experts in referring to principals in the New York City public school system before World War II and before the creation of the politically powerful United Federation of Teachers in the 1960's. The principals' responses were replete with complaints about the impact of certain sections of the UFT collective bargaining agreement on their ability to manage the school. All of the principals were once members of the UFT and often tempered their remarks by stating that they respected the union and understood why their members sought work rule changes. Most of the principals, though not all, got along well with the UFT Chapter leader in the school. Nevertheless, very few principals in our small sample of schools failed to mention one or two "problems" with the restrictions in the UFT contract. The complaints centered around one or more of the following issues:

"UFT" transfers Most of these principals worked in neighborhoods that were viewed as undesirable, so that several of them stated that they had some difficulty attracting teachers and did not receive many applications from teachers who wanted to transfer into their school. However, they were vigilant about teachers who they believed had been poor performers in other schools. Teachers, instead of getting a "U" rating (unsatisfactory) and thus prevented from transferring, are sometimes allowed to transfer out of the school. There are allegations that this happens because of intervention by the UFT Chapter leader. It should be noted, however, that principals do not have to go along with this "arrangement," so it is a matter of management expedience as well as a "gray area" where a union representative can exert informal pressure. This type of circulation of underperformers also occurs in other government agencies and large companies, even when no unions are involved. In other words, managers in any institution often choose to circulate "problem personnel" rather than correct deficiencies or fire subordinates. Some principals, however, seem to object to seniority preferences in transfers, a common complaint of managers in unionized workplaces.

Circular 6 (named for a Chancellor's memorandum) The 1995 collective bargaining agreement no longer allowed principals to assign teachers to administrative tasks such as lunchroom or bus duty unless there was a 75% vote of the UFT Chapter members to continue administrative assignments. This meant that teachers had to be replaced by aides. One angry principal stated, "Circular 6 is very stupid. Al Shanker must be turning in his grave. He always cared about quality education and children. There is no way these aides can be trained." Other principals, however, were able to secure the agreement of the UFT Chapter to continue these assignments while others weathered the transition to using lower-cost aides. Within EPP there were differences of opinion about the elimination of involuntary administrative assignments. Some member organizations had a reaction similar to the principals in our study, while others saw it as a way to fit more staff development into the school day. In past monitoring studies, EPP has viewed the assignment of teachers to low-level, non-instructional duties as not being cost-effective.

Mandatory grade planning The collective bargaining agreement for teachers allows schools to hold an after-work 40-minute faculty conference once a month and an after-work 40-minute department or grade conference once a month. In many schools, the grade conference is held during the work day when all the teachers in a grade are given the same preparation period. However, principals do not have the right to determine what teachers do during their preparation periods, so using this time for grade planning is voluntary on the part of teachers. When Circular 6 was issued, as a result of the 1995 collective bargaining agreement eliminating "administrative duty" periods, elementary school teachers were given a "professional period" in addition to their preparation periods. In each school, the principal and the UFT Chapter Chair had to mutually agree on a "menu" of activities for these professional periods (such as staff development, tutoring of individual children, training on the use of computers, etc.). Each teacher in the school had to choose from among the choices on the menu. In two of the schools in this study, the principals had attempted to make grade planning mandatory during professional periods and had been informed that they could not assign teachers to these professional tasks. Instead, the principals found that they had to abide by the "menu" concept of individual teacher choice. With a 75% vote of UFT chapter members, however, grade planning during professional or preparation periods can be instituted.

Review of written lesson plans The 1991 collective bargaining agreement eliminated the prerogative of a principal to require that written lesson plans be submitted by teachers. However, we verified that principals can still require that lesson plans be on the teachers' desks and that at any time there was a question about the effectiveness of the lesson plan, the principal could ask for it.

Though not intentional, the interviews with principals gave us a picture of how each had been forced to adjust to restrictions on their prerogatives to review written lesson plans and to assign teachers to non-instructional duties or instructional planning. Some principals had adjusted, others had not even when they enjoyed good relationships with the UFT Chapter Chair. As could be expected, the two principals with combative relationships with the UFT remained very angry about all these changes and stated repeatedly that "the UFT is running this system." But what came through in all the interviews was the lack of notice to principals that these changes were going to take place.

CHAPTER VIII CAN SUCCESS BE REPLICATED?

EPP is more confident about the public school system's ability to improve its lowest-performing schools than we are about the system's ability to significantly increase the number of high-performing schools. Currently, there are not enough resources for schools and not enough supports for principals so that *more* of them can succeed. While strategies such as creating professional networks for principals and sharing "best practices" have value, they do not address more fundamental problems of a lack of adequate staffing at the school level and a disregard or neglect of site-managers. Given that a high proportion of students in New York City are low-income and need to learn English, both factors closely associated with lower levels of academic performance, strong instructional leadership at the school building level is critical. A systemic analysis of how to maximize principal performance beyond a fear factor, networking, or sharing "best practices" needs to be in place. What other supports will encourage more principals to be high-performing?

EPP's 1996 report on ten schools that improved sufficiently to be removed from the state's list of low-performing school concluded that State Education Department sanctions were effective, particularly the threat of school "reorganization." But a distinction needs to be made between strategies for improving the lowest-performing schools and strategies that will result in large numbers of high-performing schools. Curbing low-performance does not necessarily translate into a prescription for high performance. The Monitoring Committee members knew going into this new study that the threat of sanctions was not a motivating factor in high performance. As the interviews progressed, it became even more evident to the Monitoring Committee that the key element that distinguished these schools from less successful ones was a highly effective principal. To a certain degree, the creation of more highly successful schools in low-income communities depends on the creation of larger numbers of effective principals. Meeting higher learning standards is the goal of the New York City public school system, but it will be attained in reality only if there is a larger pool of effective principals to ensure that high quality classroom instruction actually takes place. In other words, without the nurturing and recruitment of "instructional leaders," the attempt to create an accountability system will amount to little more than replacing low-performing principals by succeeding waves of low-performing principals. Indeed, in New York City and across the nation education reform organizations are reporting that this is an emerging problem in schools that have been "reorganized." Even in urban school systems without tenure, many low-performing principals remain in place because there is a dearth of promising candidates (and even minimally qualified applicants) willing to apply for these positions. When the issue goes beyond principals being able to bring low-performing schools up to minimal or acceptable standards to principals being able to bring them to a high level of performance, the need for creating a talent pool of able principals becomes even more critical.

Therefore, one of our objectives in the interviews with principals was to identify, through a series of open-ended questions: 1) the background and training that helped them be effective principals; 2) who provided them with support as principals; and 3) the systemwide reforms they believed were needed to create more successful schools. Despite the differences in approaches among the principals we interviewed and despite the frequency with which we got a wide range of answers to most questions, the Monitoring Committee heard the same answers to the questions on background and training.

The background of these high-performing principals Our question to the principals about their background was very open-ended. We asked, "What, in your background, do you think helped you be an effective principal?" We wanted to find out how these individuals developed the leadership capabilities to run their schools successfully and if there were any similar patterns. Only two of the principals we interviewed were "career switchers," so the majority have been in teaching all their adult lives. Five principals mentioned some aspect of religion or religious schooling. Several principals referred to personal experiences, including sports or church activities or the encouragement of a former principal, that helped them develop the leadership qualities that have helped them in their roles as principals. But for twelve of the fourteen principals interviewed, including those who related a variety of elements of their backgrounds, the most important element of their background that they believed prepared them to be principals was their education. "I had an outstanding education and it made me love learning" is representative of a good number of deeply felt responses. Four principals specifically mentioned the schools they attended as children. For some, it was their college experience that "turned them on," but others mentioned developing a deeper commitment to education only when they were teachers or assistant principals. We saw the same moral factor at work in the turnaround schools in our earlier study. This sense of a deeply felt "avocation" is difficult to operationalize, but the development of a moral commitment to one's profession seems to be an important factor in the background of effective principals, even when it comes fairly late.

The most valuable training experience of these principals When asked "How should principals be prepared for their jobs?" the answers were fairly unanimous: "First be a teacher, then be an assistant principal" and "Be a successful teacher and then go up the ranks." Five specifically stated that it was important for assistant principals to work under a capable principal and some mentioned the need to have an internship so that assistant principals had experience working under a number of principals. One respondent credited his skills as a principal to having been an itinerant special education teacher and administrator, which afforded him the opportunity to observe both good and bad practices of many principals. Another principal believed that too many new principals have not had enough time as assistant principals under at least two different principals. Low-performing principals, he felt, "had been pushed up too fast, the '100-day wonders.'"

Several of the principals spoke at some length about the importance of being a good classroom teacher as a prerequisite to becoming a supervisor. They explained that a problem that plagued school systems was that some teachers seek to become administrators because they are not capable teachers; do not like teaching or being in the classroom; or like administrative issues more. These individuals enter the pool of candidates for assistant principal positions and are least likely to be capable educational leaders. This is why several principals stressed the need for principals to encourage *good* teachers to become administrators. One principal explained, "The problem is that good teachers want to stay in the classroom. I know I did. My principal actively encouraged me to go for an administrative position, or I never would have done it. I was pushed along." As one expert told us, teachers "self select" to apply for administrative positions by meeting state requirements for graduate courses in supervision and passing an examination. So it is important for principals to encourage talented teachers to consider administration.

It is understandable that a sample of principals who have moved up the ranks from teacher to principal would hold up their career experience as the norm that should be followed. There is, however, an alternate proposal for developing effective educational management that comes from the business community. Top managers of both small and large companies do not necessarily "move up the ranks," but often switch industries several times during their careers. Both Seattle and San Diego school districts have chosen superintendents with no background in education but excellent credentials in having successfully managed large organizations. In each of these school districts, however, instructional and curricular issues have been delegated to individuals who have moved up the ranks from teacher to principal. Particularly in schools serving low-income communities where the instructional quality of staff must be particularly high in order for students to reach acceptable levels of academic performance, it is questionable whether a manager who has not been an effective teacher can succeed. As it is, many mediocre and low-performing schools have principals who are good at the business aspects of running their schools. This management efficiency, however, has not translated into good student outcomes.

Most respondents, even those who reported positive experiences with a training program for principals (only two locally, the others outside of the city), did not mention "training" as part of the preparation for being a principal. When some of our experts were asked about training, there was no consensus as to the quality of principal training programs. The principals' union representatives stated that the handful of local training programs were underbudgeted. The CSA has asked the state legislature, the State Education Department, and the Board of Education to create principal leadership centers run by peers and practitioners. One CSA representative said:

> "It's very hard to teach leadership. With some people, you don't know if they have the capacity to ultimately become a leader. Not every person is going to be effective. At some level, leadership is intangible. It's a passion. Some have it. Some don't. You must have training and then you must have effective follow-up. It's important to work on a plan, not just aspects of a plan. Just about all the training there is for principals now does not include follow-up."

Another expert stated that many local training programs are ineffective because they focus too much on instruction and curriculum, which principals should have already mastered, and not enough on leadership techniques that will help them successfully run their buildings and be a "change agent." The Harvard and University of Pennsylvania programs were cited as model training programs that put the emphasis on the leadership roles that principals must play.

The almost unanimous assertion by principals that the best preparation for their jobs was moving up the ranks from classroom teacher to assistant principal stands in contrast to changes in Board of Education staffing practices. There are now fewer assistant principal positions in elementary schools than ten years ago. EPP was under the impression that there was a formal policy of not filling assistant principal positions when they became vacant, called "attrition." Representatives of the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget and the Board of Education deny that there was such a systemwide policy from 1990 to 1997, when cuts to the Board of

Education totaled $2.7 billion. EPP was informed that community school districts were asked to develop their own "savings plan," which in some districts "might" have included not filling A.P. positions in elementary schools. Whether or not there was a formal policy at the central Board of Education or at the community district level, our assumption of a decline in assistant principal positions in elementary schools has been confirmed. The State Education Department collects surveys filled out by schools throughout the state. The Information, Reporting, and Technology Services Team of the SED, in response to an inquiry by EPP, reported that these Basic Education Data System surveys show that in the 1990-91 school year there were 662 assistant principals in New York City elementary schools. By the 1996-97 school year, the number of assistant principals had decreased to 528, or 138 fewer positions, a 20% decrease. The most recent *School Based Budget Reports* issued by the Board of Education in June 1999 show an increase in expenditures for assistant principal positions, but not all of these new assistant principals are in elementary schools.

Sources of support for principals Unlike the similarities in principals' answers to our questions about their background, there were a variety of answers to the question, "Who provides support to you as a principal?" Music, sports, graduate school, and religious faith were each mentioned once as sources of support. Six principals cited participation in a local network of principals as an important support factor. But a few respondents quickly mentioned that these networks had their downside, because participating in them took time away from their other work. The most frequent response was "my spouse" or "my family," though one principal said that he could not have succeeded in his job if his children were still young. In fact, many of the remarks were so qualified that they left the interviewers with the impression that our question about "support" was painful to some. Here is a representative answer:

> "It's actually a pretty lonely job. I come here at 6 am and I leave at 6 pm. Sometimes I'm here on a Saturday or a Sunday. My wife says, 'Enough already with your school.' As you can see, I fixed up this office because I live here...Other principals in the district are no support. Some of them can't wait for me to fail."

Loneliness came up quite frequently in the interviews, with several principals stating that after eight to ten years on the job many principals experience a "terrible loneliness." Only four respondents mentioned school staff as a source of support, and in two instances staff members were individualized as "key people" and "my A.P."

The real surprise in reviewing the answers to this question was that only four principals mentioned the superintendent or the district as a source of support. It could be possible that most of those interviewed interpreted the question as to who provided support to them as an individual. We asked an earlier question about whether the community school district helped their school. With the exception of three principals who responded that the district was helpful because they were left alone or ignored, the rest were extremely positive about their district and their superintendent. Some said, "This is the best district" or "The superintendent is great." As could be expected, district funding for their school's programs was often cited as evidence of support, but just as frequently they mentioned the districts' staff development programs.

Do superintendents help to create high-performing principals? This is such a good question that in retrospect the EPP Monitoring Committee members wish we had asked it of principals. Instead, we asked some of our experts to give us their opinions. Most were uncertain about the answer. Here are two representative, but ambivalent, responses:

> "There is a much clearer role of superintendents in stopping a school from becoming low-achieving or in helping a school turn around...Some problems are allowed to fester. I don't know about the role of a superintendent in helping a school become high-achieving. I think you have to be in the [school] building for that."

> "Superintendents need to be in their [school] buildings more. There are some principals that are just one step away from being effective. Some guidance and feedback would help them. But that's not the only problem. Some superintendents have never run a school. If you have a successful school, then you will have no problem with your superintendent. But will the superintendent share information on the success of the school?...What works well you should be able to replicate throughout your district."

One of the experts mentioned the change in school principals in Community School District 2 in Manhattan under former Superintendent Anthony Alvarado. In four years, 20 out of 30 principals were replaced. The district's principals changed from a majority of males primarily interested in the business aspects of running schools to a majority of females with strong backgrounds as excellent teachers.

Another question that the Monitoring Committee cannot conclusively answer is: if high-performing principals generally come from the ranks of high-performing teachers, should superintendents come from the ranks of high-performing principals? We attempted to find out how many community school district superintendents had no experience as a school principal. As of February 1999, 13 of 32 superintendents (or 41%) lacked experience as a school principal. Yet there are other questions EPP has about the role of superintendent under the administration of Chancellor Crew. The 1996 school governance changes has provided the Chancellor with greater authority over these positions and, in turn, the Chancellor has invested them with greater responsibility for performance. Across districts, the management style of community school district superintendents varies from "hands-off" to "flexible" to "engaged" to "dictatorial." Yet superintendents are also playing the role of middle management in translating central office directives to the school district, so even the most "hands off" superintendent is constantly communicating a series of requirements to principals with whom there has been little if any prior "collaboration." In an era where collaboration is being encouraged at the school level, principals find themselves having to constantly meet "top down" directives from the community school district and the central office of the Board of Education. It is akin to "Do as I say, not as I do." In districts where superintendents are more interested in the business aspects of educational administration and are very "top down," the combination can leave some high-performing principals very isolated. The prescription that superintendents "should be in their school buildings more" assumes that most superintendents have Anthony Alvarado's capacity to improve instruction and curriculum. As stated earlier, some principals interpreted "support" from their district as being left alone.

CONCLUSION

Without addressing the issues of resources and support, school success will not be widely replicated throughout the system. Let us draw a parallel here: if a school focused only helping the bottom quartile of student test takers and ignored strategies to help students in the middle or in the top quartiles achieve at higher academic levels, improvement will be limited. The efforts of the State Education Department and the Board of Education to help the failing schools turn around is commendable, since schools in low-income neighborhoods have historically been relegated to second-class status and to meeting lower standards. "The floor" must be raised. But it is important to remember that the city's public school system has a double challenge in communities serving poor and immigrant neighborhoods: decreasing the numbers of low-achieving schools and increasing the numbers of high-achieving schools. The second challenge is often ignored or assumed to be adequately addressed by programs geared to solving the problem of low-performance. EPP's look at schools that have gone beyond *minimum standards* leads us to conclude that not many more schools will be able to follow suit without a shift in resources and attention to the needs of instructional management at the school level.

We end this report on a somber note. In many ways, this parallels our interviews with principals. The EPP Monitoring Committee met with "high-moral" principals who were very self-confident and very positive about their schools' achievements, the professionalism of their teaching staff, and the support they got from parents in helping their children learn. Most importantly, they believed that good education would make a difference in the lives of the children they served. But their enthusiasm about their mission did not translate into enthusiasm about how their job as principal was currently structured.

EPP Monitoring Committee members are used to hearing complaints from school-site personnel. Complaints are part of the public school culture as well as the culture of New Yorkers. This round of interviews was no different up until the end of the interview. When the Monitoring Committee constructed the interview guide, we had assumed that their responses to questions about preparing principals, support, and systemwide reforms would focus on the need for more training, the creation of professional networks, and sharing of "best practices." Instead, in almost half of the school-site visits these questions at the end of fairly positive interviews seemed to trigger expressions of dissatisfaction that went beyond what could be characterized as a "complaint." For example, when asked how principals should be prepared for their jobs, two respondents stated that no one should take the job of principal. When several prompts did not produce any other answer, it became clear that the remark was not humorous. Several others said that the job of principal was "thankless" or "the principal is the 'fall guy' in the system." In two instances, Monitoring Committee members and staff conducted some of the most difficult and emotionally taxing interviews in their years of experience in visiting schools. Put simply, a good number of the principals seemed to be deeply unhappy about their jobs. Had we been interviewing principals of low-performing schools experiencing stress and worry about being "reorganized," the Monitoring Committee would not have been taken aback. But these were effective principals who had done a good job.

Midpoint through our school-site visits, when a pattern became apparent that in every other school visit these last few questions would change the interview responses from optimism to pessimism and, in some cases, sharp expressions of anger, the Monitoring Committee came to the conclusion that the lack of a collective bargaining agreement with the Board of Education and the battle around tenure were taking their toll on some principals. Many principals mentioned low pay for administrators and tenure as sore points. The sharp ideological debate on public education was also at play, even though all the interviews were conducted before the Mayor proposed a taxpayer-funded voucher program for private schools and the elimination of the Board of Education. Another important factor was the growing tension about the new State Education Department tests for the fourth grade and whether the underfunded New York City system would be able to meet the challenges posed by these higher testing standards. The textbook salespersons who served as our experts were even more adamant than the CSA representatives that many principals that they talked to in the course of their business day were deeply discontented and that morale was at one of the lowest points they could remember.

In closely reviewing all the interview responses, including those of our panel of experts, and in light of an increasing volume of articles about problems in recruiting principals, even to schools in affluent communities, the EPP Monitoring Committee has come to the conclusion that there may be sources of dissatisfaction in the job of a principal that go beyond New York City but which may be more manifest in this and other urban areas. Unanticipated issues have emerged in a decade-long restructuring of education from its emphasis on bureaucratic procedures towards a focus on accountability for student performance and school-site decision making. Despite the long recognized importance of effective principals to genuine school reform, both in New York City and nationwide, the role of the principal has become an unattractive career path for many teachers. Principals have found their jobs increasingly more difficult, and, most importantly, have a growing sense that they have been marginalized. One of our experts stated that principals were in an untenable situation, not only in New York City but across the nation, at the same time that more is being asked of principals:

> "The principal's job is one of the hardest jobs on earth and nobody has an understanding about this. The principal has no control over budget, no control over collective bargaining, and there is no good training for them. The principals need more control over the budget and in choosing teachers. In some schools the principal manages to push the collective bargaining contract to the limits and uses it creatively. In other schools, the contract is used like speed bumps, slowing down change and making every change a hassle....The whole issue of accountability needs to be predicated on the ability to move your little system around. This would eliminate a whole lot of the 'blame game.'"

Combat fatigue seems to be an occupational hazard of high-performing principals in New York City. As stated earlier in this chapter, several principals told us that their job's downside is loneliness, which becomes particularly acute after eight to ten years. One principal warned that the hours were such that "it's easy to become jaded or emotionally skewed." One expert felt that the hyper vigilance that was described in Chapter VI carried an additional toll, especially when combined with high expectations that principals have for themselves:

> "Principals feel embattled. They feel attacked by all sides. The culture of a high-performing school is one of constant vigilance. It's not just the long hours. It's the daily combat. They start their day with certain intentions and they are presented with one

> small battle after another until they go home. It's not just battle fatigue. It's not just the low pay -- it goes deeper than money. It's more like they're giving everything that they have and nobody gives them recognition. They care, but no one cares about them. And they know it. They have to not care that nobody cares about them and that they get no recognition. They have to be content that they are meeting their own standards. These are pretty strong individuals anyway, I mean, no one has to hold their hands...Then there is a certain degree of disappointment in what they're able to achieve. They work long hours and they're smart, but they are considered failures. They consider themselves failures, secretly, of course. Here they are, knocking themselves out for years and only half the kids are at grade level."

In popular movies and television, principals who manage to turn around failing schools or to bring their low-income children to high standards of academic achievement are treated as urban heroes, and, indeed, they are. But they also attempting to perform their function as leaders within a highly charged ideological debate about the value and performance of public education. It came as a surprise to some members of the EPP Monitoring Committee that principals feel personally diminished by assertions of conservative think tanks who say that education should be privatized. Though many of the principals we interviewed had been featured positively on television news shows and newspaper articles, several principals mentioned press coverage as a "problem." Here is a representative answer to a question of "What makes your job more difficult?":

> "I can't complain about the coverage my school has received. It's all been good. But most of the news stories are bad. It's very difficult to hear a good word about public education. It's also very difficult to combat bad press. Good models of education should be promoted. Coverage should be more realistic."

Several principals mentioned the Mayor in less than positive tones and stated that he had "politicized" issues and didn't seem to like public schools. In retrospect, it is understandable that principals, even those who are very high-achieving, would feel that they and their deeply held values were under attack. Again and again, principals referred to the famous 1899 quote of John Dewey, which still serves as the moral compass of American education practitioners and advocates:

> "What the best and wisest parents want for their children...the community [must] want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely."

Here is a representative statement from one principal, "My philosophy is, what should you do for children? WHAT YOU WOULD WANT FOR YOUR CHILDREN! Is it so difficult for them to understand?" For many principals, the institutional integrity of the public school system seemed to be at stake and they believed that the hard work and achievements of public schools in New York City were given no recognition in the larger society.

The Mayor was not the only object of their anger. The interview question about their recommendations for system-wide reforms revealed that in the spring and fall of 1998, the "reorganization" of failing schools, the issue of tenure for principals, and the lack of a collective bargaining agreement had also created tensions with the Chancellor. Here are some representative statements:

> "I would bring principals on board. We are off in a corner someplace. If I went away from this school, things would come to a halt. Currently principals feel alienated and ostracized. The tone of the school is set by the shadow of its leader. The character of an institution is the shadow of one person."
>
> "50% of the principals are untenured and the Chancellor is still attacking us."
>
> "I'd act more kindly. I don't get a friendly, warm feeling of support from the Chancellor. First thing he said when he came in was that he was going to take away tenure. I'd give the position a warmer feel. I'd try to make people feel more happy about themselves. You have to build people up--not tear them down."
>
> "I'd create a climate of respect and support for principals--not clubbing them on the head. Real support. Everyone is scared out of their minds. For the new principals, they're absolutely petrified."

Rethinking the role of principal in an "accountability" system In our last report, we predicted that institutional change would not necessarily increase "collegiality" and that it often produced conflict. In the transition period from a system that focused too much on procedures and student eligibility for services to a system that focuses on instruction and student academic outcomes, low staff morale may be one of the consequences. Fear of creating unhappiness has often meant a toleration for poor performance. The earlier transition in many American corporations in the 1980's to systems of accountability for performance, local decision making, and the elimination of mid-level bureaucracies created prolonged periods of low staff morale. Public school systems across the country, in instituting genuine systems of accountability for performance, have increased tension levels for teachers, principals and superintendents. EPP has no way of knowing with certainty if the job satisfaction of some high-achieving principals would have been higher had there been a different Mayor, a different Chancellor, no challenge to tenure rights and conflict-free collective bargaining. But at the conclusion of this report, in light of the low level of job satisfaction expressed by some of these high-performing principals, we believe that some of the sources for this dissatisfaction go beyond issues and events in New York City. Here are some of the problem areas that EPP, as a result of this study of high-achieving schools in New York City, believes need to be addressed in most, if not all, urban school systems:

School-site decision making and accountability for student outcomes must be accompanied by additional resources. In the new system of accountability for student outcomes, principals are the most likely to be removed for poor student academic performance, not teachers or superintendents. In the absence of systemic changes, such as more resources, smaller class sizes, better trained teachers, better and more well-rounded curricula, more student support services, principals are "left holding the bag." On the other hand, waiting until the eventuality when all these systemic reforms take place means that essentially no one is held accountable for their performance. It goes without saying that the lowest performing principals need to be removed. But at other levels of principal performance, school systems need to go beyond a "carrot and stick" approach to principals and to arrive at an agreement as to the *minimum* bare-bones staffing and operating funding levels that principals need to succeed in their jobs. ***Many urban elementary schools operate below adequate staffing and supply levels, so that only those schools headed by the most driven principals can surmount these hurdles.***

Recognize the needs of school-site management. Public recognition of high-performing principals, the sharing of "best practices," creating networks of principals and funding flexibility are not sufficient for "capacity building" at the school level. These putative "supports" did not emerge as critical factors for the principals we interviewed. The lack of general education counselors, assistant principals, and office staff coupled with limitations on the ability of principals to make teacher assignments meant that even hard-driving and focused principals find themselves burdened with doing the work of these non-existent staff. Less effective principals are simply overwhelmed. ***If principals are to be managers of instruction, they must be given the time and the staff to manage.***

Effective recruitment practices from teacher to superintendent must be established in order to encourage genuine, not just titular, instructional leadership. Across the nation, the differential in pay between senior teachers and entry-level administrators has narrowed or been eliminated. Increasing the salary of administrators may encourage more teachers to apply for these positions. In turn, increasing the numbers of assistant principals will provide better preparation and more applicants for principal positions. On the other hand, higher administrative salaries and more entry-level, school-site administrative positions are no guarantee that high-performing teachers will apply for these positions or secure them. There needs to be an assertive recruitment policy to attract high-performing classroom teachers to administration or their ranks will be filled with individuals who cannot succeed as instructional leaders. ***For schools serving high-poverty and immigrant communities, it is critical that principals have the capacity to create a high quality instructional program that closes the achievement gap between their students and those of more affluent communities.***

Sanctions for low performance must be balanced with rewards for high performance. Principals whose schools are performing at mediocre levels are not in danger of school "reorganization" either in New York City or in any other urban school district. Given the current competition among school districts for competent principals and the dearth of candidates, New York City is at high risk of a serious and prolonged "brain drain" of principals in all parts of the city. ***But the implications of a "leadership" crisis is particularly negative for schools serving high-poverty communities which in the past have always had fewer candidates apply for principal positions. What incentives would invite promising candidates to apply to schools serving "high risk" populations where principals are more likely to fail in raising student achievement levels up to the norm?*** What are the combinations of incentives that will induce more principals to strive to achieve higher levels of school performance?

PART II

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE MISSING LINK IN SCHOOL REFORM: INCREASING THE NUMBER OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-SITE MANAGERS

Principals have been marginalized within education reform This report on high-achieving schools has made the Educational Priorities Panel more reflective about our own coalition strategies for school improvement. From very early on, we have accepted the tenet that "the principal is the instructional leader of the school," but a review of our policies does not reveal that this policy has been operationalized to any great extent. The same could be said of other organizations and nationally recognized proponents of instructional leadership. While "teacher-proof" curricula are widely disparaged, many of the models of school improvement are structured to be "principal-proof." Yet those who are directly engaged in restructuring schools, under one model or another, report that the likelihood of success depends on the capabilities and leadership of the principal. Similarly, the training of teachers, both in college and through staff development, is undergoing intense review and restructuring at the national and state levels. So far, the training of principals has not received comparable attention.

Given the current deficits in teacher preparation as well as efforts to improve public education, the "management of instruction" at the building level would appear to be a pivotal element in successful reform, especially in urban school districts with high-needs students. Even well-prepared teachers in the most collaboratively structured school cannot be expected to be self-directed, unless of course, the ideal is that schools should be run as 1960's "collectives." Since most educational reformers do not fall within this ideological spectrum, the vacuum of ideas about how to produce more effective principals is puzzling. It could be that there is an assumption that many principals are "traditionalists," and therefore least likely to embrace change. But how can change come about without 1) acknowledging the pivotal role that principals play in driving innovation and 2) developing a comprehensive strategy to ensure that principals have the high-level training needed to be change agents? Education reformers as well as education officials still seem to be focused on "inputs," such as teacher training or grants programs, without paying comparable attention to the management and integration of these "inputs" at the school level.

EPP has been a strong proponent of greater accountability for principal performance, but we have paid less attention to how to improve "educational management" so that there are more successful principals. We have not been alone in neglecting a balance between principal accountability and principal preparation. The new buzz word in education reform circles is "capacity building," and it is particularly strong in New York City. Yet "capacity building" for instructional management at the building level seems not yet fully operational. Rather than building a larger pool of assistant principals in elementary schools, the pool has gotten smaller over the this decade. As for training, some of the experts EPP consulted stated that it was merely underfunded, while others believed it was of poor quality, including programs in university settings. Despite the recognition of the centrality of principals in the creation of effective schools, they are "off in the corner someplace" in the currents of education reform. Where are the debates surrounding prescriptions for replicating effective instructional management? Where are the comparisons between different systems of recruitment and principal training? This intellectual vacuum needs to be filled. Our most immediate question, however, is why this vacuum exists. We have two theories: the prevalence of "single-issue" reform and micromanagement.

"Single-issue" reform The need for multiple reforms and the need for an integration of these reforms at the school building level is often ignored in literature and research about schools. One of the constants in miscommunication between education reform advocates and education administrators, whether at the chancellor level or the school level, is about how improvement takes place. Advocates tend to focus on one or a narrow set of strategies, while administrators focus on the multiplicity of reforms that have to take place all at the same time. This "failure to communicate" is understandable. There is a division of labor that takes place among advocacy groups, for example, some organizations focus on the rights of parents and students while other organizations work on improving curriculum or teacher training. This division of labor is driven, in part, by competition for foundation funding which, in many instances, is secured by the promotion of a single strategy for improvement.

Elected officials also tend to narrow their focus to a limited number of improvements in order to secure changes in the law or funding, in part because they must deal with many other issues. But another reason that elected officials limit themselves to a few priorities is that they must secure support from a wide range of executive branch and legislative decision makers. The longer the "laundry list," the more difficult it is for them to build a coalition and get enactment or funding for reforms. Also, the more limited and more understandable the issue, the easier it is to claim a victory.

The reality is that many "trains" have to "run on time" at the school level for student learning to take place even in the most mediocre schools. In an underfunded school system like New York City, where the average per-pupil expenditure is now $1,500 below the average for the rest of the state, many trains do not run on time. This means that a considerable amount of principals' energy is taken up with a variety of problems that eat up the time and attention they would otherwise devote to instructional issues. EPP Monitoring Committee members were interested in learning about the priorities of high-performing principals. At four times during the interview guide, they asked what accounted for the schools' success. In addition, every principal was given a checklist of twenty-eight school reforms and asked to check those that were "Very Important," "Somewhat Important" and "Not Important" to high student achievement. Both the interview questions and the checklist results were confirmation of the "multiple strategies" orientation of educational administrators. A frequency analysis of the checklist responses on the next page shows that over half of the twenty-eight reforms were ranked as "Very Important" by 70% of the principal respondents. In contrast, on the same checklist that was filled out by a group of twenty education advocates, the frequency analysis shows less than a third of the twenty-eight reforms were ranked as "Very Important" by 70% of the respondents. In other words, advocates were much more likely to create a hierarchy of reforms and to chose a more limited number as the most important, while school administrators were much more likely to chose a broader set of reforms.

REFORM CHECKLIST

This is a list of reforms that are frequently mentioned in discussions of school improvement. Respondents were asked to check which reforms were "Very Important," "Somewhat Important" and "Not Important" to high student achievement. Below is a comparison of the responses of a group of fourteen principals of high-achieving schools and the responses of representatives of twenty public education advocates regarding reforms that are "Very Important." Of an original checklist of twenty-eight needed improvements, only the responses that garnered at least a 70% agreement are shown.

Checked "Very Important"	Percent of Principals	Percent of Advocates
School Leadership	100%	75%
Better Training of New Principals	93%	70%
Better Training of New Teachers	86%	85%
Better Teacher College Preparation	71%	____
Higher Quality Curriculum	79%	70%
Better Supervision of Teachers	71%	____
Better Staff Development	71%	____
An Orderly School Day	100%	____
An Active School Planning Committee	71%	____
Smaller Classes	71%	90%
Guidance Services	____	90%
Higher Expectations of Students	93%	70%
More Funding	71%	70%
Able to Hire/Fire Staff	93%	____
School Self Assessment	71%	____

Micromanagement Compounding the conflict of "single focus versus multiple focus" miscommunication is that from the onset education administrators must deal with elected officials and advocates who are less respectful of the institutional prerogatives accorded to administrators of other large municipal institutions, such as law enforcement, fire fighting, and sanitation. Most advocates and elected officials have spent at least sixteen years attending school and many are parents and grandparents of children who are attending or have attended school. This experience gives them a sense of familiarity with schools which easily crosses the line from an attempt to secure better performance into an attempt to second-guess educators and to micromanage the running of school systems, especially when there is a perception of low performance. Worse still, the current ideological attack on public education has added impetus to attempts to impose single issue strategies on education officials.

Administrators who are in charge of the day-to-day operation of a school or a school system, on the other hand, are far more aware of how many different components of an educational program must work in tandem. Curriculum reform without well-trained teachers, strong principal leadership in buildings in disrepair, new science textbooks without science labs and equipment will result in very limited improvements. Miscommunication and micromanagement have much more serious consequences in the five large cities in New York State. Suburban and rural school districts raise their own property tax revenues and control their own budgets with voter approval for increases and, therefore, there is much more input by education administrators in the allocation of resources. While elected school board members in smaller school districts can often give administrators a very hard time, at least there is an ongoing, if heated, dialogue. In contrast, urban school districts' budgets are controlled by city officials and their budget staff members, who are far less knowledgeable of how the components in a school system work together and who have many other competing municipal priorities. In addition, the "dialogue" between officials and school administrators is often played out in the daily newspapers and sound bites on radio and television. In reviewing news coverage of the New York City public schools in *The New York Times* from 1920 to the present, we were surprised to find how often New York City mayors succeeded in shaping school practices. For example, Mayor LaGuardia, who professed to "let the educators run the schools," radically changed procedures in school lunchrooms and initiated a "voluntary" donation by teachers of a portion of their salary for food and clothing for poor families during the Great Depression. Other municipal employees were not required to make similar donations.

The heavy hand of city officials in shaping what goes on in the schools manifests itself not only through the budget, but through collective bargaining. EPP staff consulted with several individuals familiar with New York City collective bargaining trends. We were particularly interested in drawing parallels between the Board of Education and the Police Department because the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association is similar to the UFT in that it is large and politically powerful, and thus has similar advantages in collective bargaining negotiations with city officials. The Superior Officers Council, which represents police precinct commanders and other police supervisors, is in a similar position to the Council of Supervisors and Administrators in that it is a smaller union that must cope with the collective bargaining agreements secured by a much larger union. First, we were informed that under the Taylor law, unions cannot negotiate each other's contracts. So neither the SOC or the CSA are formally consulted about PBA or UFT demands. There seems to be some logic in this, because if another union is brought into collective bargaining sessions, this would quickly degenerate into untenable three-way negotiations.

We were also told that throughout city agencies, site supervisors, who "once were gods" had experienced diminished authority since World War II. This includes precinct captains who must contend with powerful PBA delegates under their command. Another person told us that he felt that supervisors had lost considerable authority in all institutions in the country. We were also repeatedly reminded that the parallel between police and the school system was a poor one because the police remain essentially organized along a military command structure where individuals are expected to get or give orders. Nevertheless, the three individuals most familiar with police collective bargaining issues stated that top-ranking police officials were central decision makers in the non-financial parts of the collective bargaining negotiations, and that as former commanders with an understanding of how precincts operate they are vigilant about work rule changes. In contrast, city officials sometimes, though not always, eclipse top-ranking education officials in negotiating non-financial parts of the collective bargaining agreement. The city officials' lack of knowledge of school-site procedures has resulted in a failure to understand the impact of work rule changes in the operation of schools. The UFT cannot be faulted for seeking work rule changes that benefit or protect their members. On the other hand, the lack of institutional respect for the educational managers by city officials has had unintended consequences at the school level. This may have resulted in limiting the supervisory prerogatives of principals more than that of site-supervisors in most other city agencies. The collective bargaining process, in particular, has resulted in micromanagement of the school day and of staff assignments by individuals who have never been in the classroom.

Principals may be more marginalized in New York City The lack of attention to instructional leadership within education circles, single-issue strategies, and micromanagement have had the most negative consequences for large city school districts across the nation: principals have had to cope with many layers of bureaucracy; programs designed at central offices, state capitals, and foundation boardrooms; strong teachers unions; and inadequate funding. Yet effective instructional management at the building level is particularly critical for creating high quality learning environments for low-income children. In the rest of the nation, city school districts in the process of transition to school-site decision making have increased communication with principals' associations or unions, but in New York City the tenure issue has created a ten-year "stand-off" in relations between chancellors and principals starting with the administration of Joe Fernandez. As this report is being drafted, there has been a three-year delay in arriving at a collective bargaining agreement with the CSA. The result is that senior teachers now have higher salaries than entry-level administrators.

Another factor that is particular to New York City is the traditional strength of mid-level bureaucracies. Despite relentless press attention to the central office of the Board of Education at 110 Livingston Street, under successive school governance changes from 1901 onward, borough and school district superintendents have had considerable administrative and budgetary powers. The 1996 governance changes gave the Chancellor more oversight over superintendents, but they still retain considerable discretion. While other large-city school districts and corporations that have instituted site-decision have reduced mid-level bureaucracies, this has not been the pattern in New York City.

The emerging crisis The principals and the experts we consulted raised the issue of a developing "leadership" crisis because so few applications were being received for principal openings. A new phenomenon has also taken place within the last few years. Suburban school districts are now seriously considering New York City principals and assistant principals for their job openings because these districts also are experiencing a lack of applicants. For the first time in our experts' institutional memories, the possibility looms that the city could face a serious "brain drain" of the best principals that would be as serious as the constant "brain drain" of good teachers. It should not take a crisis for the Board of Education to focus on the problems of recruitment and retention of effective educational leaders. Any strategy to increase the numbers of high-performing schools must be grounded in an effort to increase the numbers of high-performing principals. In the recommendations that follow, we focus on the problems identified in this monitoring study:

- Lack of support for principals
- Lack of rewards for high performance
- Lack of a recruitment program to encourage high-performing teachers to consider applying for administrative positions
- Lack of apprenticeship opportunities and high-quality staff development for administrators

The recommendations that follow are organized in three sections: Reforms that can be implemented immediately and long-range reforms to drive resources to the school level and to improve recruitment. With the exception of creating an "apprenticeship" program for assistant principals, an idea that a few principals mentioned, none of the recommendations reflect the suggestions or advice of the principals, teachers, and parents that were interviewed or the experts that were consulted by the Monitoring Committee. These ten recommendations were adopted by members of the Educational Priorities Panel. They emerged from discussions on strategies to help solve the problems we identified through this monitoring study. Essentially, we asked ourselves the question: How can a higher number of effective schools be created in low-income communities?

SHORT-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Add more indicators of neighborhood distress in creating categories for "similar schools."**

- **Create objective funding formulas for textbooks and supplies so that every school can have basic per-pupil allocations to meet these needs.**

- **End the reduction of state compensatory funding to schools when student achievement improves.**

- **Review the quality of training programs for principals in New York City against nationally recognized programs.**

- **Reduce early-grade class sizes in all elementary schools.**

1) The State Education Department should change its methodology for creating "similar schools" categories by adding other indicators of neighborhood distress. The State Education Department and the Board of Education compare schools serving students with similar socioeconomic characteristics in order to more fairly measure school performance, since research shows a very high correlation between the proportion of low-income students in a school and average student performance levels. Currently, this comparison is based on similar rates of student mobility, students needing to learn English, and students eligible for free lunch. Rates of free lunch eligibility, in particular, are dependent on efforts by school staff to solicit voluntary applications by parents and these applications are not audited. Schools that are able to get almost all their students to submit applications appear to be serving the highest poverty populations, which may not necessarily reflect actual poverty rates. In addition, schools serving large immigrant communities report that they have more difficulty in getting parents to fill out any forms. EPP Monitoring Committee members saw a wide variation of "neighborhood distress" that did not coincide with the categories of "high need" and "highest need." EPP recommends that additional socioeconomic factors be added to the "similar schools" methodology, factors that are independent of free-lunch eligibility, such as neighborhood rates for unemployment, low birth weights, or felony arrests. These indicators are summarized in *Keeping Track of New York's Children* issued annually by the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York.

2) The Board of Education should convene a task force of principals and superintendents to determine systemwide per-school allocations for textbooks and supplies. Education advocates have long suspected that the "unofficial" policy of the city's Office of Management and Budget has been to let parents and school staff subsidize the cost of textbooks and supplies. During the seven-year period when there were $2.7 billion in cuts to the Board of Education, OMB repeatedly targeted for cuts supply money for teachers and principals. Currently, teachers can individually order up to $200 in classroom supplies through the "Teacher's Choice" program, while principals receive a $3 per student allocation for school-wide supplies through "Principal's Choice." In some schools, teachers voluntarily pool a portion of their supply funds for the schools, in others they do not. Neither "Choice" program is adequate to meet the supply needs of school staff. In previous monitoring studies we have found many teachers must dip into their own wallets and that principals often depend on the fundraising by their parents' associations to supplement textbook and supply purchases. In this study we learned that administrators' time is taken up with coping with these inadequate allocations.

Funding for textbooks on a per-pupil basis has declined, now that the one-time $70 million city allocation for textbooks has ended. We examined the Board of Education's *School Based Expenditure Reports* for two years, 1996-97 and 1997-98. Systemwide, the $93 per-pupil expenditure for textbooks fell to $71 per pupil. We also looked at two categories of funding for supplies, "Instructional Supplies and Equipment" and "Supplies, Materials, Equipment, Telephones." Combined, these expenditures increased from $140 to $198 per pupil. The surprise was the variation at the community school district level for these per-pupil expenditures. For example, in 1996-97, when the systemwide average expenditure was $93 per pupil for textbooks, some districts spent over $100, while other districts spent less than $50. As for supplies, when the systemwide average expenditure was $140, the per-pupil spending at the district level ranged from over $200 to a little over $70. Some district superintendents purchase textbooks for all the schools in their district and thus get a discount on the price, which could account for why some districts' expenditures are low in this area. But there is no ready explanation for per-pupil expenditures for supplies as low as $70, which are clearly inadequate.

EPP has continued to advocate objective funding formulas for schools for textbooks and supplies so that every school can have at least a basic, guaranteed per-pupil allocation that is not dependent on community school district practices. This has not received a positive response by the budget staff at the city's Office of Management and Budget or the central Board of Education. The central Board of Education's current "Performance-Driven Budgeting" policy focuses on the flexible use of money so that funding streams can be combined to help districts meet their improvement objectives. But why should these minor, but crucial, allocation levels to schools be determined by varying district policies? We believe this issue merits further review, particularly since the central Board of Education allocates funds to the community school districts based on objective formulas, whereas community school district superintendents have broad discretion in how they allocate district funding to schools. Why should some schools get textbook and supply funding that is less than adequate?

3) The Board of Education should allocate state compensatory education funds on the basis of student poverty so as to eliminate "punishment for performance." Schools must not lose funding because their low-income students perform at or above grade level or have shown academic improvements. State Extraordinary Needs Aid (ENA), based on the proportion of poverty and students needing to learn English, is reallocated by the Board of Education to community school districts as Pupils with Compensatory Education Needs (PCEN) on the basis of low student achievement. This creates funding disincentives for improvement in student performance. Worse still, some superintendents use these state funds to compensate schools for not having enough low-income students to qualify for federal categorical funds. These practices undercut the rationale at the federal and state levels for providing additional support to schools serving high-poverty communities.

4) The Board of Education, possibly with the help of an outside consulting firm, should review the quality of training programs for principals in New York City against nationally recognized programs, such as those at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. The experts that EPP consulted were divided about the effectiveness of local and university-based staff development for administrators. The critics believed that these training programs are too focused on current instructional methods and curriculum, which principals and assistant principals should already have mastered, and not enough on leadership techniques, planning, and the development of an instructional mission that will help them successfully run their school buildings and navigate the constant changes in testing, instructional methods, and curricula. The training of managers to encourage high performance is a complex undertaking, but it is a proven strategy for systemwide improvement.

5) The city and the Board of Education should reduce class sizes, especially in the early grades where research shows significant and long-term benefits to student achievement. New York City has the highest average class sizes in the state, which may partially explain why the gap is so large between city students' achievement levels and those in the rest of the state. City elected officials need to assertively seek continued federal and state funding for this purpose. Estimates are that an additional 3,277 to 4,657 new teachers would have to be hired to reduce all kindergarten to third grade classes from the current average of 25 students to an average of 20 students. Given its underfunding, the New York City Board of Education does not have the resources to hire all these additional teachers, but funding has been promised at other levels of government. In the 1999-2000 school year, $51 million is available to New York City in federal funds to reduce class sizes in the early grades, but as of June 1999 Congress has not acted on President Clinton's proposal for continued funding. Two years ago, the August 1997 state budget agreement included $75 million in state grants to reduce class sizes in the state's largest cities starting in 1999 and ending in 2002. Unfortunately, the Governor has proposed that these grants be eliminated. As this report is being drafted, negotiations are taking place to reinstate the grant program but no state budget agreement has been reached.

Should continued federal and state funds become available for this purpose, what are the bottom line costs to the city? A 1998 study conducted by the New York City Independent Budget Office for Public Advocate Mark Green provides a cost estimate to the city for reducing kindergarten to third grade class sizes to a limit of 20 students (which is preferable to an "average") and provides two scenarios. In the high-cost scenario, all students would remain in their current schools, which would require additional annual city funding of $134.1 million. In the lower-cost scenario, some children would be reassigned within a district to take advantage of building underutilization in adjacent schools, so the additional city cost would add up to only $34.5 million annually. Assuming state Building Aid reimbursement, net capital costs to the city for creating more classroom space would range from a high of $40.9 million to a low of $7.8 million in annual debt service payments. More details on class sizes and cost estimates appear in Appendix C.

LONGER-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS: RESOURCES

- **Provide sufficient funding to ensure a sound, basic education for New York City students.**

- **Provide more staffing support for administration in the elementary schools.**

6) The New York State courts and legislature should reform the state's system for funding schools so that all public school children have the opportunity to meet higher learning standards. More meaningful support for management at the school level will come about only when the New York city school system is adequately funded. The current $1,500 per-pupil funding gap between New York City and the average for the rest of the state needs to be closed. There are two lawsuits, one by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and another by the New York City Civil Liberties Union, challenging the state's failure to provide a sound, basic education to all of its public school students. Without more textbooks and supplies, higher salaries, more staff development, lower class sizes, buildings in a state of good repair, and more staffing at the school level, the city will continue to lose dedicated teachers and administrators to adequately funded school districts that are able to provide them with more support as educators.

While conservative ideologues continue to argue that "money doesn't make a difference," students in higher spending districts consistently outperform students in lower spending districts. Kentucky and Texas, states that have reformed their funding system so that students in low-income school districts receive adequate education resources, are now showing significant gains in student academic achievement. While both these states also developed accountability systems for schools and for principals, New York State's decade-old effort to develop similar accountability systems has not shown comparable results because it has been done without funding reform. The February 1997, U.S. General Accounting Office report, *School Finance: State Efforts to Reduce Funding Gaps between Poor and Wealthy Districts*, ranks New York 45th among 49 states on a scale of equity in per-pupil funding. The contrast between education resources in the city and those in the suburbs is particularly stark. Appendix D provides a comparison of per-pupil spending in the Downstate region. A forthcoming 1999 EPP report, *Checkerboard Schooling: How State Aid Affects High Minority School Districts in New York State* by Dr. Joan Scheuer, documents dramatic differences in funding and student achievement between high-minority, higher-poverty school districts and more affluent school districts.

The pattern in other states is that once the courts have made a ruling, state legislators are left to fashion a remedy. The New York State legislature should craft an education funding system that 1) fully recognizes the extra effort needed to educate low-income and immigrant students and 2) takes into consideration regional cost differences in measuring school district wealth as well as expenditures. Of critical importance is the elimination of limits on increases of state aid, which have penalized districts with enrollment growth. Annual negotiations by legislators based on regional "shares" of education funding should also be prohibited because they result in tinkering with school aid formulas to arrive at pre-negotiated amounts. These formulas should be objective measurements of changing student and school district needs and not be used as a hidden method of political deal making.

7) The Board of Education should convene a task force of principals and superintendents to determine systemwide minimum out-of-classroom staffing levels for elementary schools. Throughout many of the interviews with principals, there was a strong sense that while they saw their duty as providing support and resources to teachers in return for performance in the classroom, there was no reciprocal agreement for elementary school principals that they be provided with resources in order to perform well as principals. Insufficient clerical staff meant they had to do filing, lack of general education counselors meant they had to work with the most troubled youngsters, and lack of an assistant principal or an additional AP meant that all out-of-classroom tasks had to be performed by a limited number of staff. While guidance counselors are mandated at the middle school level and librarians are mandated at the high school level, no comparable staffing requirements exist for elementary schools.

At one time, additional budget allocations were directed to all school buildings for staff. The budget cuts starting in 1991, however, slowly eliminated the "Basic School Staffing" allocation to schools. Budget cuts also resulted in an attrition "cost savings" program for assistant principals, which meant that positions were not filled when they became vacant through resignation or retirement. While there have been increased investments in the school system since the 1997-98 school year, they are tied to discrete programs and the numbers of assistant principal positions are still limited. The "staffing up" that has occurred at the central office and community school district superintendents offices under Chancellor Crew, as the city's finances have improved since the 1995-96 school year, has not occurred in the offices of the principals, though they have had other welcome increases in personnel and equipment, such as more funding for books, more staff developers, more computers, and more arts programs. They also have more teachers because of a UFT campaign to identify classrooms that were over the collective bargaining maximum of 32 students in elementary schools.

In Appendix E, we have estimated the costs of providing additional out-of-classroom staff to all elementary schools as a hypothetical exercise in evaluating whether the resources exist now to provide more support to principals. Using current salary data, the low-cost scenario of adding one part-time school aide, a librarian or staff developer, and an additional assistant principal would add up to $87.8 million for elementary schools. The high-cost scenario would come to $120.6 million for a school secretary, a guidance counselor and an additional assistant principal. Within current Board of Education budget constraints, these investments could be made *if there were no urgent claims on resources.* But every year other needs must be met, such as enrollment growth, summer school programs, changes in special education mandates, and additional remediation programs.

Given the general underfunding of the New York City Board of Education, a persistent "solution" that is offered for inadequate staffing at the school level is to transfer funding for personnel from other levels of the system. In Appendix F we look at personnel and budget increases over a two-year period to see whether 1) resources went disproportionately to central and district levels and 2) whether sufficient resources could have been shifted to the school level to fund our hypothetical scenarios. We find that the bulk of personnel increases went to schools and that even the low-cost scenario could not have been funded through a transfer of personnel allocations from the central and district levels.

LONGER-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS: RECRUITMENT

- **Initiate a pilot project of having high-performing principals serve as mentors to apprentice assistant principals.**

- **Initiate additional pilot projects beyond the one sponsored by the New York City Partnership in order to evaluate the impact of merit rewards and the creation of "lead" teacher positions.**

- **Evaluate current hiring procedures and practices to determine whether they support a merit promotion system**

8) The Board of Education should initiate a small pilot program in which assistant principals are mentored by high-achieving principals serving "high-needs" students. Four of the principals we interviewed mentioned creating an internship program for assistant principals. Given that part of the problem in turning around low-performing schools has been a dearth of promising candidates for principal openings, this makes sense to us. The reality is that with or without tenure, superintendents and the Chancellor have been able to replace principals of schools that have been placed on the State Education Department's SURR list. They have been less successful in finding replacements that have been able to turn around these low-performing schools. The history of many of these SURR schools is a revolving door of "failing" principals. EPP also learned from our 1996 study of turnaround efforts that SED's experiment with a "buddy system" which paired principals of SURR schools in New York City with successful principals from the suburbs lacked credibility. Principals from more affluent communities had little experience in coping with the daily problems faced by schools in high-poverty communities.

EPP's recommendation is to narrowly focus this internship program on schools where instructional leadership faces greater challenges and to recruit already experienced assistant principals for the internship. Rather than placing an "intern" in all high-poverty schools, placement should be restricted to schools that are succeeding and where the "mentor" principals' practices are worth replicating. A two or three-year internship program where assistant principals would stay a year at different schools should provide sufficient on-the-job training so that a small cadre of better prepared candidates is created for high-poverty schools. This would also provide a reward to high-performing principals in the form of more administrative support.

EPP's recommendation, however, is that principals assess the capabilities of their interns carefully and weed out those interns who seem unlikely to be effective instructional leaders. The downside of too many "internship" programs in both the private and public sectors is that there is an assumption that length of service is sufficient, with little honest feedback on quality of service. There are several reasons why, absent a salary supplement, assistant principals who want to become principals would agree to delay applying for these positions in order to participate in an internship program. One strong inducement would be the greater likelihood of being appointed principal. An even more important factor would be an improvement in the odds of being a successful principal.

9) The Board of Education should encourage different types of pilot projects so as to fully evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and unintended consequences of A) the creation of "lead" teacher positions and B) merit rewards as methods for recruiting highly skilled instructional leadership and for raising student achievement. In order to close the achievement gap between low-income and immigrant students and their more affluent peers in the city and state, schools serving high-poverty communities must create optimal learning environments. Unfortunately, administrative positions often attract teachers who are not successful in the classroom and who are least likely to be genuine "instructional leaders" capable of creating these optimal learning environments. How can the New York City school system do a better job of identifying the best teachers and recruiting them for administrative positions? An additional problem is the lack of incentives and rewards for teachers and administrators, other than professional pride, for making the additional effort needed to increase school performance from mediocre to high-performing.

The New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, a leading organization representing the business community, has initiated a five-year, $29 million pilot program in three community school districts called "Breakthrough for Learning." Community School District 19 was the first district selected for the program. The strategies to increase student achievement include providing monetary awards to administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals within a school when students meet specific performance targets. The project is geared to improving the use and understanding of diagnostic information on students' strengths and weaknesses, including year-to-year gains in achievement. Professional development includes an award and stipend for teachers who complete the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' certification and a "master class" for principals to help them develop a strategic plan for their schools in the coming year. One of the many innovative components of "Breakthrough for Learning" is the creation of "instructional lead teachers," who are nominated by their schools because of their teaching skill and who receive a stipend for providing assistance to their colleagues. This assistance includes visiting classrooms, sharing best practices, demonstrating model lessons, and helping their peers interpret diagnostic test data. The NYC Partnership's summary of the project states a rationale for the creation of a "lead teacher" position: "It need not be the case that good teachers be eligible for compensation increases only when they are 'promoted' out of what might be their true love, the classroom, and into an administrative position."

Organizations that are members of EPP do not all agree with the creation of "lead" teaching positions or with merit reward systems. In addition, some of our member organizations believe that the "Breakthrough for Learning" pilot is modeled on a corporate concept of the role of school administrators, in other words, that they should be managers who delegate instruction to the professional teaching staff just as managers in other institutions successfully delegate critical functions to their staff. But EPP members do agree that, so long as there is an experimental project by the NYC Partnership in existence with the components of "lead" teachers and merit rewards, additional pilots should be encouraged based on other concepts of school administration, types of rewards, and goals.

"Lead" Teacher Positions: Currently, many schools have "comp-time" teachers who spend part of their day on out-of-classroom assignments, such as serving as a student coordinator or dean. Teachers who work at district or central offices are designated as "teachers assigned." All of these collective bargaining designations, however, merely spell out the terms under which teachers can work outside the classroom. In addition to the "lead" teachers in Community School District 19, there are several other districts that have also created a similar position with various names. Efforts to turn around an elementary school in Community School District 2 after it was placed on the state's list of low-performing schools included the creation of a "distinguished teacher" position. The district recruited new staff to the SURR school, including two highly regarded teachers assigned elsewhere in the district. They were paid an additional $10,000 each to work with staff development experts, other teaching staff and students. The school was removed from the list after one year. District 2 now has four "distinguished teachers." Community School District 22 has also created a similar "master" teacher position.

EPP's particular interest is in learning if these highly skilled instructors become a talent pool for administrative positions. Currently, teachers with tenure are given only two types of evaluations, "S" for satisfactory or "U" for unsatisfactory. Several principals and experts we interviewed noted that teachers "self-select" to become administrators by taking the requisite graduate level college courses and a test needed for a license in educational supervision and that a certain portion of candidates for administrative positions are teachers who want to escape the classroom. Hiring committees made up of teachers, parents and the principal may have inadequate information about candidates' potential to be "instructional leaders." The designation of "lead" or "distinguished" would help these hiring committees identify the best candidates for administrative positions. EPP is aware that not all good teachers want or have all the interpersonal and organizational skills to be good managers.

Yet another potential benefit could be the improvement in the quality of staff development. It is unclear to the EPP Monitoring Committee how some community school districts and some principals recruit staff developers. "Self-selection" as well as a lack of information as to past classroom performance seem to be factors in low-performing districts and schools. The creation of a "master teacher" position based on peer nominations and exemplary performance reviews by principals could potentially create a pool of more qualified staff developers. A potential downside is that a "lead" or "distinguished" teacher would be assuming some of the functions of a principal without the authority of the principal. Would the result be role confusion and conflict or more "buy-in" for new instructional methods by the teaching staff?

EPP recommends that the Board of Education encourage additional pilot projects. One might provide partial or full scholarships for graduate administrative courses to exemplary teachers nominated by their peers and administrators. Another pilot project might simply provide additional staff development opportunities, such as attending national conferences or training during the day for a group of two or three teachers nominated by their peers for their performance and willingness to share their expertise. There could also be further experimentation by other community school districts in recruiting a cadre of "master" teachers for low-performing schools under redesign on the basis of an additional salary supplement for extensive peer consultation and coaching. Over time, this pool of circulating "master" teachers would become highly prepared candidates for administrative positions.

EPP is well aware that in several school districts, most notably Rochester, the "master" designation has become almost synonymous with seniority and that in our own 1995 study of new teachers, we found that many "mentors" were simply teachers with the most seniority. Without a clearly articulated goal for creating these "intermediate" positions, such as an urgent need to improve the school's performance, these designations tend to be viewed as a potential for "favoritism." Pilot programs, therefore, must be carefully constructed so that the performance improvement targets for schools are clearly articulated for both teachers and administrators, and the success of the pilot programs must be evaluated on the basis of whether these targets have been met. While one of the objectives of more experiments with "lead" teacher positions should be the recruitment of more highly skilled instructors into administrative positions, they should be premised on an expectation that the work of these "lead" teachers results in higher student performance throughout the school or the district.

Merit Rewards Both in this study and in EPP's previous study of schools that have turned around, we have come to the conclusion that sanctions to schools with low performance must be balanced with rewards for high performance. As we have documented, there are few rewards and, in fact, a loss of funding when schools in high-poverty neighborhoods succeed in raising their student achievement levels up to the average for the city. It will take several years to evaluate whether NYC Partnership's bonus system for schools provides sufficient incentives for improved performance or whether other strategies of the "Breakthrough for Learning" pilot program, such as better diagnosis of student achievement data, prove to be more effective. But the Board of Education as well as community school districts should pilot other rewards beyond bonuses. Incentives that do not include additional compensation that should be explored include additional assistant principal positions, the provision of conference center retreats at no cost to the school or community school district, and more funding for substitute teachers so that staff can attend in-school training during the day. The Chancellor's Honor Roll schools could also be given small grants so that administrators and teachers could attend national professional conferences in other states. The potential here is for high-performing schools to be rewarded in a way that creates a constantly replenished pipeline of highly trained, highly capable staff that can be promoted to administrative or staff development positions in other schools. But even a special tribute dinner for school staff, underwritten by the private sector, might be in order as well as small, regular meetings with high level city, Borough President and Board of Education officials.

10) The Board of Education should retain an outside consulting firm to evaluate the impact of current hiring procedures and practices to determine whether they support a merit promotion system for administrators. One of the clearest rewards for good performance in any system is the opportunity for advancement. In turn, the promotion of highly qualified individuals to key leadership positions leads to better systemwide performance. Until the 1996 reforms in the governance system for the New York City school system, the possibility of developing and sustaining a merit-based system was not even under consideration. When some of the experts EPP consulted were asked whether the New York City school district had a merit-based system, they told us that they had never been asked this question before or had to think about it. The question about the role of merit in advancement should be asked more frequently, but the answer to such an important question needs to be based on an informed and dispassionate review.

Rather than focusing immediately on the mechanics of selection and hiring procedures for assistant principal and principal positions, called the "C-30 process," and those for community school district superintendents, called the "C-37 process," a private consulting firm should evaluate current career and recruiting paths of administrators who have succeeded and those who have not to see whether there are discernible correlations between the backgrounds of key administrators and their success rates in improving student learning. What are the most common patterns in the career ladder from teacher to principal and to district superintendent? Because the 1996 governance law stressed principal accountability for student academic achievement, a uniform guideline for principal performance reviews by superintendents was created with the help of an outside consulting firm and an internal Board of Education committee composed of principals and superintendents. The May 1998 "Principal Performance Review" has thirty-two categories of performance. At the beginning of 1999, the Council of Supervisors and Administrators alleged that some superintendents had not conducted performance reviews of several principals. But there are other issues surrounding the relationship that superintendents have with their principals. Some superintendents have never been a principal of a school, the traditional apprenticeship for this high ranking position. Can prior experience as an effective manager be a substitute for having been an effective instructional leader? Are superintendents expected to be instructional leaders or are they middle managers? EPP does not know the answers to these questions, but we believe that they need to be addressed. School staff are now urged to be introspective about their beliefs and practices. A similar self-diagnosis needs to take place at higher levels of the public school system.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A:
PROFILES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN HIGH-POVERTY NEIGHBORHOODS

This section provides brief descriptions of the schools based on our interviews. Schools are identified by their student enrollment numbers. All references to textbook series have been eliminated so as to avoid an unintentional endorsement of publishers.

Most of the information comes from the 1996-97 Annual School Report issued by the New York City Board of Education and the State Education Department during the 1997-98 school year. Building capacity data is from the June 1998 BOE report, *School Facilities: Capacity-Enrollment-Utilization.* Figures on the student poverty rates are from the Board of Education's Division of Budget Operations and Review *Allocation Memorandum No. 1* for the 1997-98 school year based on the prior-year percentage of students receiving free lunch from forms filled out by parents and the percentage of families on public assistance from census data. Numbers have been rounded.

Teacher experience: Some teachers are counted twice, because they have been in the school for less than 2 years, but have more than 5 years experience teaching because they have previously worked at another public or private school.

LEP stands for Limited English Proficient students.

"Homogeneously grouped" classes means that students in a grade are tracked into different classes for "top" students, "average" students, and "below-average" students based on academic performance. "Heterogeneously grouped" classes means that they are not.

"Cluster" elementary school teachers are specially assigned to teach classes in a specific area of instruction, such as music, art, science, or reading skills, and who cover classes to provide preparation periods for regular classroom teachers.

Special education categories refer to the following:

Resource room: students spend most of their day in general education classrooms, but receive additional instructional help during one or more periods in smaller classes.

MIS I, MIS II, MIS III, and MIS IV: These are smaller special education classes for children with moderate disabilities. At the time this study was conducted, a majority of these children spent most of the school day in these special education classes. The test scores of these children were reported separately in the 1996-97 Annual School Report and were not included in the school's average test scores. The Annual School Report for the 1998-99 school year will now include the test scores of these special education students in the school's average test score results.

Citywide: These are special education programs for children with more severe disabilities. This program is administered centrally, not by the local school or the community school district. Several schools in our study share part of their building with these programs, but the programs that are under the administration of the Division for Special Education (known as Citywide) are treated as a separate school for the purpose of assessment.

PS 450

1997 enrollment 450 pupils from K to 5, immediate neighborhood
Special education program: Resource Room
Special education referral rate 3.8%, lower than city average of 5.4%
144% above capacity (shares building with another school), building 73 years old

89.3% of students are eligible for free lunch
39% of the community is receiving public assistance
26.8% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 31.6%
63.2% Hispanic; 13.4% Black; 11.9% Asian; 11.5% White

Mix of bilingual and English as a Second Language classes
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Many partnerships with outside organizations & extensive after-school programs
Library with part-time librarian plus class libraries

Guidance counselor two days a week
Physical education twice a week, cluster position
Fully developed art and literature program
Staff development: two full-time staff developers (funded by Title I & tax levy)

Principal with 7 years experience, no assistant principal
66.7% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
25.0% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
87.5% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
94.0% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 89.7% compared to 90.2% for city

58.4% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
82.8% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We teach [children] through school-wide themes, expressive writing, expressive arts by teaching to the whole child and by teaching values. In order to accomplish this, we need the support of community and parents. I treat staff as family. Staff should be family." Teacher's quote: "We never bought into one method. We take what is good from a variety of sources." Parent's quote: "The principal is calm. He never loses his cool. He never closes a door on a parent. He treats them with respect...There are no secrets. [Teachers] never tell parents they have no time. They are very open." Principal attended Principal's Institute at Harvard. On teachers: "I am very careful in interviewing new teachers. This is the most important thing I do. Often subs become new teachers...I look for a high level of commitment, for a willingness to work beyond the school day...I prefer to hire teachers who have had student teaching experience...and have a wide knowledge of subjects and a high level of expectation." Principal performs formal classroom observations and evaluations of teachers, but believes other principals do not do enough or do them properly. Instructional strategy: "I looked at the school day and discovered that there was a lot of wasted time, if you add up all those moments. I eliminated that wasted time and maximize instructional time." Believes that principals must "stay focused" and speak in a "moral voice." In September the school holds a "curriculum night" where teachers are introduced to parents. The district's literature-based reading program is supplemented with phonics. There is a stress on student writing and math manipulatives. In April sends out a 21 point checklist to all parents registering their children for kindergarten with exercises to help them teach their children letters, colors, numbers and to encourage the parents to read to their children daily and teach them to use the public library. Problem: Reduced funding because of small school size and high student achievement levels.

PS 460
1997 enrollment 460 pupils from K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS IV
Special education referral rate 4.8%, lower than city average of 5.4%
113% above capacity (shares building with another school), building 34 years old

100% of students are eligible for free lunch
34% of the community is receiving public assistance
2.9% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 14.6%
50.7% Hispanic; 47.2% Black; 1.4% Asian; 0.6% White

English as a Second Language (separate bilingual school in same building)
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Some partnerships with outside organizations & enrichment before-school and remediation after-school
No library, class libraries & lending system where teachers check out books
No guidance counselor
Physical education once a week and cluster position
Fully developed art and literature program
Staff development: principal, administrative assistant & reading teacher

Principal with 18 years experience, one administrative assistant
49.0% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
10.2% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
69.4% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
96.3% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 90.4% compared to 90.2% for city

51.8% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
55.3% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Principal's quote: "We believe in a classical curriculum integrating a multi-cultural perspective...I firmly believe that our children will not be able to join the middle class unless they are educated at a very high standard and given cultural experiences so they know about the world...We have developed a comprehensive daily schedule which begins with a literature mini lesson, math problem of the day, followed by three reading periods, math, science and social studies." Teacher's quote: "We have a dedicated staff that has the best interests of the kids at heart. We give a comprehensive reading program that I feel encourages the kids to become better readers." Parent's quote: "This is a good school because it's very academically challenging. They work my son at his maximum potential. The school is very structured. The teachers are very warm, attentive, and caring." Principal has served as a mentor for more than 15 supervisors and is participating in a St. John's University doctoral program for principals. On teachers: "I look for teachers that are bright, capable, committed to learning and who see teaching as a profession. I encourage them to create interactive and structured lessons, that is, to model higher level thinking for the children. Inexperienced teachers miss this important element in a lesson. Children need to be given the opportunity to see others think aloud." Instructional strategy: "Urban schools must provide a more structured program of instruction to insure that all the critical elements of an integrated thematic curriculum are mastered by the teachers first...With a 5 1/2 hour day and 8 hour course requirements, we have to find efficient opportunities to integrate the learning process. Our children are exposed to additional learning opportunities during the lunch hour period. We have divided this period into three distinct parts, eating time, playtime and a read aloud enrichment presentation." Believes that "a primary role for the principal is to bring together all the resources, especially staff development." Each classroom presents a "class show" as well as a science exhibit. The school holds four awards assemblies each year. Problem: Movement of good personnel to district office and other schools.

PS 550

1997 enrollment 554 pupils from pre-K to 5, neighborhood with 14% out of zone
Sp. ed. program: Resource Room, MIS IV (also shares building with Citywide)
Special education referral rate 5.5% , slightly higher than city average of 5.4%
90% of capacity (shares building with Citywide), building 20 years old
99.5% of students are eligible for free lunch
100% of the community is receiving public assistance
27.4% of students are LEP, higher than district average of 18.0%
69.5% Hispanic; 28.8% Black; 1.3% Asian; 0.4% White

Mix of bilingual and English as a Second Language classes
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Only partnership is with NYPD & Library Access, homework reinforcement, and remediation after-school program
Library with cluster position librarian
No guidance counselor
Physical education 2 to 3 times a week, field hockey and "Bonus" gym
Arts cluster
Staff development: In-school workshops funded by Title I & tax levy

Principal with 9 years experience, one assistant principal
70.3% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
13.5% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
81.1% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
95.1% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 91.4% compared to 90.2% for city

70.5% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
63.0% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: " I used the reading test as the rallying point...It tests the right things and I like preparing for it. Now, not only do we get good scores, but they learn that we have a test-driven curriculum." Teacher's quote: The relationship between the principal and the teachers with parents is very open. If I have a problem with a student, the first thing I do is call the parents. If that does not work, I send a note home. The staff, principal and parent organization work very well together." Parent's quote: "We have a great principal. He goes outside at 3 pm. He greets parents along with the AP. There is not one parent who does not know him...The teachers give all they've got and you can tell. It's rare that they are absent. It's rare that you find the teachers not trying." Principal is heavily involved in city professional networks and advises new principals. On teachers: "I am proud that four to five of my current teachers started off with me as paras...In this school, someone who is doing 110% is a slacker, because everyone is doing 150%...When I interview new people, I try to determine what they need and give it to them. We give them a lot of support...I tell the teachers, 'This is not a job. It's a moral commitment. If you treat this as a job, you will fail.'" Instructional strategy: "I'm big into motivation. I really like motivational techniques. I used to be a football coach. I use a quote of the day to motivate everyone. Teachers know I'm into reading. Our standards are so high here for teachers. We will never succeed with bad teachers in the classroom." Believes that principals should "capitalize on hard workers" and set the school in one direction by identifying a focus to bring the staff together. The school holds an Open House in September or early part of October that sets the tone for the entire year. Uses a literature-based reading program supplemented by phonics. Stresses reading and conducts parent workshops, "I believe in assertive discipline in the home...If they are not sophisticated enough to enhance the [learning] program for their kids, they must be willing to direct their kids to the proper resources." Problem: "Foster care children enter this school with a history of being bounced around from home to home and school to school."

PS 560

1997 enrollment 558 pupils from K to 5, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I
Special education referral rate 7.5%, higher than city average of 5.4%
150% above capacity, building 108 years old

100% of students are eligible for free lunch
88% of the community is receiving public assistance
27.7% of students are LEP, higher than district average of 24.7%
86.7% Hispanic; 6.5% Black; 5.1% Asian; 1.7% White

Mix of English as a Second Language and bilingual classes
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Some partnerships with outside organizations & Latchkey program that stresses art and writing
Library, but used for remediation and librarian has become media teacher
Guidance counselor
No physical education
Fully developed music program
Staff development: one staff developer

Principal with 6 years experience, one assistant principal, one suspension dean
66.7% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
18.2% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
84.8% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
92.2% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 91.1% compared to 90.2% for city

54.0% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
70.5% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "In other schools the teachers find a problem with each child; we want a solution with every child...Every child that walks into this building will be safe and educated. Every child who leaves will be prepared to live in the real world." Teacher's quote: "We have an open attitude in this school. Everybody knows what is going on. We help one another. Teachers have standards here. We have a good leadership team. Every Wednesday afternoon, and whenever we have to, we discuss everything." Parent's quote: "The students that came to this school are now teachers here...In this school we work with parents and teachers and the community, and it's like a whole big family." On teachers: "I could write a book about this! There is no connection between their background and their performance in the classroom...Some have the fanciest resumes, but the people are brain dead. Others have the shortest, blah resumes and they're wonderful in action." Principal visits classrooms frequently. "Teachers are coming into a building where everything is known. We don't leave teachers alone here. We bond with a weak teacher. One teacher told me that she thought it was overwhelming when she came here. We just kept giving her all the rules and all this advice. Everyone respects everyone here, including children. And they know it. So, teachers understand the rules and the atmosphere here very fast." Instructional strategy: "It's important what you do in kindergarten, then in first grade, and then in second grade. I can point out in 4th grade who is going to be a professional and who is going to buy or sell drugs. We can break into that pattern, we really can." Believes that a principal must know what's happening in the school building and be a master teacher. The school holds very successful Parent Teas to acquaint parents about their children's curriculum. Top students in each class are rewarded by a meal at Burger King. Problem: "I'm trying to get private money so that we have enough textbooks."

PS 565

1997 enrollment 563 pupils from K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I and MIS I/II
Special education referral rate 7.4% is higher than city average of 5.4%
95% of capacity, building 47 years old

96.5% of students are eligible for free lunch
54.2% of the community is receiving public assistance
2.2% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 14.6%
46.4% Hispanic; 51.4% Black; 0.5% Asian; 1.1% White

Merged with bilingual school in same building
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Many partnerships with outside organizations & remediation after-school
Library, but no librarian on staff
No guidance counselor
Physical education, three cluster teachers
Arts through collaboration with outside group
Staff development: one staff developer

Principal with 9 years experience, one assistant principal
49.1% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
7.0% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
86.0% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
92.4% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 89.3% compared to 90.2% for city

61.3% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
66.8% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "Our success has a lot to do with our expectations for our students. It is imperative that we have high standards for all of our students. Homogeneous grouping is not popular, but it has worked for us. This allows the teachers to cover more material in the classrooms and it allows us to give extra support to the students that need it." Teacher's quote: "In my opinion, this is a top-down school with strong leadership and a strong administrative team along with a dedicated staff. We have a set mission, and we all believe that we can help children to achieve their best." Parent's quote: "We have a very good principal. She's on the ball, gets things done, and has a lot of programs going. We have a good assistant principal and a good staff of teachers...The school is very clean and the custodian does a good job. This is a safe school, and the police are very cooperative." On teachers: "A good staff is essential in order to have an effective school. I believe in synergy. The solutions to the school's problems will be more effective if it comes from the staff instead of just the principal. It's very important that teachers know what the expectations are. I'll make sure they know the expectations...But I'll also have teachers observe other teachers." Instructional strategy: Believes that principals must be organized and know what makes an effective school. "You can be very good in your area, but you must develop good public relations with staff and with the public." In September holds Back to School Night where teachers tell the parents what the school year looks like and homework policy. Uses a reading series that combines phonics and literature for grades K-2 and a literature-based series for grades 3-6 as well as two different math programs, one for the early grades and another starting in grade 3. Problem: "Getting good teachers is very difficult...I'm having problems in this area. If the teacher has not had student teaching experience or teaching experience in the city, it's extremely difficult for them to be successful in the classroom. Not everyone can teach in an inner city school."

PS 570

1997 enrollment 570 pupils from pre-K to 5, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I and MIS IV
Special education referral rate 3.2% is lower than city average of 5.4%
92% of capacity, building 93 years old

100% of students are eligible for free lunch
43.5% of the community is receiving public assistance
21.5% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 28.1%
49.9% Hispanic; 49.6% Black; 0.3% Asian; 0.0% White

Bilingual classes
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Many partnerships with outside organizations & remediation after-school
Library and librarian on staff
Guidance counselor
Physical education cluster teacher (works in play yard because no gym)
Highly developed arts program
Staff development: two staff developers

Principal with 11 years experience, one assistant principal
63.8% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
12.8% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
70.2% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
88.1% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 86.2% compared to 90.2% for city

66.1% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
66.3% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We believe in 'Multiple Intelligences.' Ours is a child-centered, activity-based approach. We believe in identifying children by their strengths as well as their weaknesses...Teachers have to believe in a culture of learning. Educationally, we speak the same language, we accept the same mission, to develop and nurture talent." Teacher's quote: "Everything is done on a collaborative basis...[As a Title 1] school-wide project school, we learned early on to work as a group addressing our needs and looking for solutions. The school has gone through a major transition over the last ten years. It began with a vision that the principal came in with and slowly it became the culture of the school." Parent's quote: "In my opinion, our principal is very dedicated to the well being of students and parents. She reaches out and offers all sorts of programs for children [in the school]." On teachers: "Good teacher preparation is very important to us. Ideally we look for teachers with a good content knowledge and a good rapport with the kids...I tap into the talents of my staff. Everyone here considers herself to be a staff developer and considers it their responsibility to work with new teachers...I recognize success. I use my teachers as resources. In this way, I create teacher-leaders." Instructional strategy: "Four times a year we do an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of students. We combine hard data with portfolio data. We have more evidence than just test scores...Every classroom is hooked up to the Internet. We're networked. Kids can go on-line. I send E-mail to every classroom first thing in the morning and E-mail reminders throughout the day. I only use the PA system to remind the kids to check the E-mail and for emergencies. We're developing a website here." Believes that principals must "know what is happening in the classroom with kids. It goes to the heart of it. You must follow up." In September holds a Back to School night where parents meet their child's teacher. Every parent signs a contract, and must review and sign homework every night. Reading is literature based. Problem: Needs resources to hire more specialists for the arts and science and more reading specialists to work with students individually and in small groups.

PS 640

1997 enrollment 640 pupils from pre-K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I, MIS II, & MIS IV
Shares building with Citywide special education programs
Special education referral rate 8.6% is higher than city average of 5.4%
60% of capacity (all rooms are occupied), building 100 years old

96.6% of students are eligible for free lunch
60.2% of the community is receiving public assistance
10.8% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 18.0%
40.5% Hispanic; 58.7% Black; 0.3% Asian; 0.5% White

English as Second Language pull-out classes
Classes in each grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Limited partnerships with outside organizations; remediation after-school programs
Library run by classroom teachers and library after-school programs
No general education guidance counselor
Physical education by classroom teachers
Art and music cluster teachers
Staff development: workshops

Principal with 11 years experience, one assistant principal
63.8% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
13.6% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
70.5% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
92.4% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 87.4% compared to 90.2% for city
56.7% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
73.2% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "My approach is to teach skills in isolation and in integrated formats throughout the grades. In grades 3 to 6, we accelerate learning, going beyond phonics into comprehension skills, literature and writing. I want verbalization in class, requiring children to explain answers, whether they're right or wrong. Also, in grades 3 through 6, each class has a monthly book report and essay contests. The school motto is 'We Try Harder.' Our formula for academic success is the 3 C's. 'We Concentrate and We're Careful, that's Why We're Champions.'" Teacher's quote: "We strive to do better and we push for literacy. We also stress test preparation with the students. We test all children upon admission, and I can tell you we see huge improvements in them after they've been here by mid-year." Parent's quote: "At all levels, teaching, custodian, security, the school is all top shape. The principal asks all of us to tell her our problems. She calls parents. Even the hallways have to be cleaned. She demands the best of everybody. She's a worker bee -- she wants everybody to work together and we do, the parents and the teachers." On teachers: "Since this is an elementary school, teachers have to know a little bit of everything. When given the opportunity, I choose on the basis of educational background. I also want them to have strong personalities, able to present themselves as authority figures. Indeed, you have to be a little bit of an actor in the classroom. I don't want clones--individuality is important. I also want to build the self-confidence of teachers. They must be in charge of their classrooms." Instructional strategy: "The school is a workplace. The desired classroom atmosphere is one of focused efficiency. We have a special attitude towards students. We see them as active learners, who are prime movers in their personal success stories. We believe in the self-fulfilling prophesy. We train students to be responsible and to control themselves." Believes that principals must take stock of the needs and problems of their particular schools. In September, holds staff conferences to review the school philosophy. Parent orientation conferences are held in September and October. Problem: No guidance counselor for general education students.

PS 670

1997 enrollment 665 pupils from pre-K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I, MIS II, & MIS IV
Special education referral rate 8.1% is higher than city average of 5.4%
71% of capacity, building 75 years old

100% of students are eligible for free lunch
73.3% of the community is receiving public assistance
14.0% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 18.0%
81.9% Hispanic; 16.2% Black; 0.5% Asian; 1.4% White

Mix of bilingual and English as Second Language classes
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Limited partnerships with outside organizations & remediation and after-school
Library and library cluster teacher
No guidance counselor
Physical education cluster teacher, team sports and access to gym on Friday
Arts program includes chorus, ceramics and arts cluster teacher
Staff development: one staff developer

Principal with 5 years experience, two assistant principals
65.2% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
19.6% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
87.0% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
88.8% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 89.6% compared to 90.2% for city

51.4% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
58.7% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We provide a safe, student-centered learning environment. We're very structured and organized and we have a tremendous emphasis on literacy and reading programs." Teacher's quote: "We have a joint effort between teachers and parents in a structured environment with a great emphasis on literacy in all academic areas for all our children." Parent's quote: "I was a student here many years ago. The school has been doing better because of the structured environment, involved parents, and the relationship between the children and their teachers. Everyone is working together as a whole." On teachers: "The things we look for is someone who is highly motivated, willing to learn new techniques and someone who is willing to collaborate with others. That's what we do here. We're getting good teachers. We have common prep periods by grade." New teachers are brought in for an orientation at the end of each August to meet with administrators and staff developer to familiarize them with the classrooms. Principal performs formal observations of teachers as well as several informal ones for new teachers. Instructional strategy: "The students used to line up. I said, let's make it productive. From 8:20 to 8:40 students are in the auditorium reading silently. We have ten minutes of reading before lunch. I have a ten point system based on class competition at the end of the month. If a class gets a ten, then the class gets ice cream and extra recess." Believes that principals must get their school planning committee members working together and establish a good relationship with all constituencies. "Express that whatever happens in the building must be a collaborative effort with the best interest of the children in mind." In September holds a Back to School night and a coffee for kindergarten parents. Parents are required to sign a reading log. Problem: "It's important that parents buy into the culture. The only problem I have in this regard is the twelve special education classes. Kids come here and are not used to the structure. Some of the classes are a revolving door. The kids come by bus. We never meet their parents."

PS 680

1997 enrollment 683 pupils from K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room
Special education referral rate 5.1% is lower than city average of 5.4%
151% of capacity, building 83 years old

97.7% of students are eligible for free lunch
56.4% of the community is receiving public assistance
24.5% of students are LEP, higher than district average of 18.2%
76.3% Hispanic; 3.2% Black; 7.5% Asian; 13.0% White

Mix of bilingual and English as Second Language classes
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Many partnerships with outside organizations & remediation after-school
No library
Guidance counselor
No physical education beyond a tennis clinic
Highly developed arts program
Staff development: one staff developer

Principal with 13 years experience, one assistant principal
62.2% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
8.1% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
87.0% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
91.5% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 92.7% compared to 90.2% for city

62.0% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
76.8% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "All children will succeed -- not can, not may. We have to know how to reach individual children. We believe that each child is gifted in a variety of ways. We identify and use areas of strength to build up areas of weakness. We don't teach to the class. We teach to individual children in small groups. We maintain running records for each child. Each teacher has to have an articulation plan for each student for the next year's teacher. This plan allows the new teacher to understand each child's learning style." Teacher's quote: "We have a dedicated staff, dedicated to professional development...We believe that children should have the resources they need...We target at-risk students early during the school year, and the after-school program helps. This year would be the first year I would send my kid to this school --we have wonderful poetry." Parent's quote: "Hard work, dedication, that's what it takes. Friday during graduation, the children did not want to leave. They were crying, holding on to the teachers. That's how much they've bonded with the teachers. The school functions well because of the closeness of parents, teachers and students. I always tell parents, 'If you have a problem, go to the principal.'" On teachers: "I sent my best teacher for training in the Renzulli methods. She was gifted. I gave her the top class in grade 4. They became successful. Other teachers wanted the same success...The teachers did not accept [heterogeneously grouped classrooms] in the first year. By the second year, they led the way." The principal creates a pool of substitute teachers from which to draw upon when there are openings. Instructional strategy: Believes that principals must treat people with respect and dignity and to be sure to make expectations clear. "Consider that all of the children are your own children or grandchildren Ask yourself what you would give them if they were your own." In September holds teas for parents where they get to observe their own children and the teacher in the classroom for one hour so that they better understand what is going on. They look at the curriculum. "During the last 3 years there has been a tremendous change for the better in the number of parents who value and support their children." Problems: Bureaucracy and lack of resources.

PS 690

1997 enrollment 690 pupils from pre-K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I, MIS II and MIS IV
Special education referral rate 10.0% is higher than city average of 5.4%
87% of capacity, building 30 years old

96.2% of students are eligible for free lunch
72.1% of the community is receiving public assistance
8.5% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 18.2%
47.0% Hispanic; 48.7% Black; 1.4% Asian; 2.8% White

English as Second Language pull out program
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Many partnerships with outside organizations & Beacon after-school programs
Library and librarian cluster position as well as library down the block
Two Guidance counselors
Two physical education cluster positions plus Beacon school sports program
Highly developed arts program
Staff development: principal works with two reading teachers.

Principal with 9 years experience, one assistant principal
62.3% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
14.8% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
94.9% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
91.5% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 88.7% compared to 90.2% for city

51.3% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
61.2% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We follow the Comer school philosophy. Our motto is 'Peace begins with me.' This motto grew out of our long-standing commitment to the principles of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program. Our school makes every effort to address the social, emotional, moral, intellectual, and physical needs of our children...I define a successful school as one that works, one in which people work together and there is trust." Teacher's quote: "We work hard, and as classroom teachers we expect a lot from our students. Teachers get along well together in this school. You can walk into any teacher's class. Everyone is willing to assist you. We do not bicker or have cliques." Parent's quote: "Our school is a new standards school, and we are working hard to follow that model. Good school work is displayed, which I believe helps students reach the expectations of good work. Teachers in this school try harder to work with parents and students when there are problems." On teachers: New teaching staff are paired up with more experienced teachers out of class. "Our teachers take this job very seriously. Everyone works diligently and effectively. A good staff is essential for success." Instructional strategy: "There must be knowledgeable people in charge of getting information to those who need it. Everyone must assume responsibility, parents, teachers, students, administrators, and the entire staff." The principal believes that the job entails good time management skills. Principals must be accessible and give clear-cut direction. In September a "Meet the Teacher Week" is held where parents at each grade level are introduced to the curriculum. Many activities act as springboards for broader parent participation. An example of this is "Tea with the Principal." Trade books are used heavily in a balanced literacy program that is also supported by an anthology series. Problem: More assistance is needed at the administrative level.

PS 760

1997 enrollment 761 pupils from pre-K to 5, 80% immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I, MIS II and MIS III
Special education referral rate 8.2% is higher than city average of 5.4%
82% of capacity, building 36 years old

98.3% of students are eligible for free lunch
51.9% of the community is receiving public assistance
17.2% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 25.1%
62.7% Hispanic; 36.7% Black; 0.5% Asian; 0.1% White

Bilingual programs
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Some partnerships with outside organizations
Class libraries
Guidance counselor (purchased from special education)
Physical education cluster position
Arts program includes choral group, a music program for the fourth grade and a cluster position
Staff development: assistant principal, peer coaching and workshops

Principal with 8 years experience and one assistant principal
60.0% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
10.9% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
76.4% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
88.7% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 90.3% compared to 90.2% for city

61.2% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
71.8% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We have a very caring and strong staff. We have very strong parent involvement. Then the children see strong support for learning. We have three houses called "units", the Primary Academy for the early grades, the Adventures "R" Us Academy for grades 2 and 3, and the Senior Academy. Each unit has a facilitator who comes into the classroom. It's one-to-one interclass visitation. We also have peer coaching which enables experienced teachers to pair up with new teachers. All the teachers plan together by grade because they have the same prep period." Teacher's quote: "Most teachers are hired through the schoolwide planning committee by word of mouth, job fairs, telephone interviews and demonstration lessons. We look for teachers with a pupil rapport. We usually see if they fit into our school community." Parent's quote: "It's a pleasure to have my child attend this school...These teachers are very sensitive to the needs of the students...The students are exposed to art, music, and drama." On teachers: "Teachers who work in this school put in much more time and creativity than teachers in the suburbs." Instructional strategy: Uses Title I funds to reduce class sizes to an average of 20 to 22 students. Assessment is done across the board starting with the first grade. All constituencies are given questionnaires to fill out on workshop topics, direction, issues they think need to be addressed, and what can be done to improve education for the students...Believes that principals must have a vision, but then they should concentrate on total involvement by staff members and parents. In September holds "Meet and Greet" week which is scheduled on a different day for each grade to enable parents to go into the classroom to find out the teacher's expectations. All parents must come in to get their child's report card. Uses literature-based reading textbook series and math manipulatives. Problem: "I would love to create an extended day program for low achievers and high achievers in the areas of reading and sports. I'd order more library books for the class libraries and have additional books for high achieving students and students who are reading above grade level. I'd have a home library."

PS 850

1997 enrollment 853 pupils from K to 6, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I
Special education referral rate 10.7% is higher than city average of 5.4%
103% of capacity, building 61 years old

88.6% of students are eligible for free lunch
69.4% of the community is receiving public assistance
28.5% of students are LEP, higher than district average of 18.3%
40.7% Hispanic; 2.7% Black; 27.6% Asian; 29.1% White

English as a Second Language programs
Classes in each grade heterogeneously grouped
Some partnerships with outside organizations & remediation, physical activities, and homework for after-school
Library with librarian cluster position
No guidance counselor
Physical education cluster position and team sports
Arts program includes vocal music, chorus and band performance
Staff development: one teacher trainer

Principal with 6 years of experience, one assistant principal
82.0% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
22.0% of teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
96.0% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
88.6% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 92.5% compared to 90.2% for city

50.8% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
65.8% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "I try to motivate the students. I remind them to read a book over the weekend. We publish a literary magazine quarterly. Students in all grades are considered for inclusion in this magazine. Every teacher reads across the grades...I'm very lucky with my staff. They are hard working, conscientious, and earnest...We believe that students can and must learn. We focus on the child. We emphasize attendance." Teacher's quote: "Our school is truly an international school. [We have students representing] 40 different nationalities...This school promotes multiculturalism and diversity. We see ourselves as a microcosm of the diversity of the world. We want children to learn from one another's culture, and we reflect this in our instructional approach. We have a great staff." Parent's quote: "Our teachers are very dedicated, and they work very hard with our children. And they are really great teachers." On teachers: Principal believes that teachers must have "stature in the classroom." If he is not sure, he asks applicants to do a demonstration lesson. Two or three times each year, teachers are sent to observe model programs in other schools. Instructional strategy: "I make sure to give a lot of positive feedback to my staff and my students. Practically every month we have a reading/writing contest to motivate the students across the grades." Believes that principals must have a plan, but must be prepared to face different situations daily. "Even when you have a plan, it's more than likely that, as a result of things coming up all day, you must be flexible and be able to re-prioritize your schedule." Uses a combination of literature and phonics-based materials and test sophistication materials as well as textbook series. Problem: "30% of our kids are in English as a Second Language. Since our third grade immigrant children test out of ESL in a timely fashion, the teachers are especially challenged to prepare these children for their city-wide tests.

PS 1340

1997 enrollment 1339 pupils from K to 5, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and speech and hearing services
Special education referral rate 2.4% is lower than city average of 5.4%
144% of capacity, building 76 years old
96.6% of students are eligible for free lunch
54.9% of the community is receiving public assistance
2.5% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 9.8%
8.2% Hispanic; 90.4% Black; 0.9% Asian; 0.6% White

English as a Second Language teacher
K & 1st grade heterogeneously grouped, from 2nd to 5th grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Limited partnerships with outside organizations & parent-run after-school program
Library with librarian cluster position
One guidance counselor
No physical education
Limited arts program, band practice at 7:30 am and attendance at Metropolitan Opera
Staff development: workshops, and in-house peer evaluation

Principal with 11 years experience, two assistant principals
92.2% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
9.4% teachers less than 2 years in this school compared to 17.9% for city
95.3% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
98.1% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 93.5% compared to 90.2% for city

70.5% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 39.7% for similar schools
81.0% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 52.3% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "Principals need to have a clear vision...There is no one magic bullet for success. You need a combination of ingredients working together. These ingredients include the staff, the parents, and the children all having high expectations; clearly defined organizational and educational goals; effective supervision and support for the staff." Teacher's quote: "We are seasoned teachers. The teachers who come, stay...Everyone works really hard. Everyone knows his job, not somebody else's job. People know it's their responsibility to perform. There are standards here ...Teachers go away to conferences and bring back new ideas. There is a high level of professionalism here." Parent's quote: "The principal has a vision for where he wants to see children and teachers go. Children in this school are able to see themselves with a future, to visualize themselves as adults with good jobs in responsible positions...The school [staff] do interesting things. For example, in one class the students have debates based on newspaper stories." On teachers: "During an interview with new teachers, I can't project how good they'll be. I ask myself whether I would want my child in her/his class. We have new teachers from Columbia, NYU and other outstanding universities. We monitor their progress. We just don't assume they're doing fine...We try to create an environment in which they want to work--I try to meet their needs." Principal doesn't perform lesson evaluations, but has teachers evaluate each other. Instructional strategy: The school is test oriented. Mock tests are administered three times a year. Each student's strengths and weaknesses are identified. The focus of the school, however, is in getting children to read books and to write extensively. A bookstore is operated by teacher volunteers and students. Books sell for $1. Over 10,000 books were sold in one year. In June has an orientation session for parents of entering kindergarten students. Students in kindergarten and first grade who can read a book are sent to the principal's office to demonstrate this ability. If they can read the book, they receive a certificate and a "Principal's Reading Club" button. Students in higher grades who write five book reports may also become members of the club. Problem: Overcrowding.

PS 1450

1997 enrollment 1447 pupils from pre-K to 5, immediate neighborhood
Special education programs: Resource Room and MIS I and MIS IV
Special education referral rate 5.9% is higher than city average of 5.4%
107% of capacity, main building 76 years old (2 other buildings)
93.7% of students are eligible for free lunch
76.4% of the community is receiving public assistance
43.8% of students are LEP, lower than district average of 48.9%
98.3% Hispanic; 0.9% Black; 0.7% Asian; 0.1% White

Extensive bilingual classes
K & 1st grade hetrogeneously grouped, from 2nd to 5th grade homogeneously grouped by ability levels
Extensive partnerships with outside organizations & extensive after-school program
Library with librarian cluster position
One general education guidance counselor
Physical education: three cluster teacher positions
Highly developed arts program
Staff development: through district and specific grants to the school

Principal with 6 years experience, three assistant principals
84.5% of teachers have 5 years experience compared to the 68.6% city average
13.1% teachers have less than 2 years experience compared to 17.9% for city
84.5% are fully licensed compared to 83.2% city average
94.2% of students remain at the school for the entire year compared to 91.5% city
Student attendance rate is 92.5% compared to 90.2% for city

50.5% of students at or above grade level in reading on Citywide (CBT) test compared to 49.6% average for city and 36.6% for similar schools
61.6% of students at or above grade level in math on Citywide (CAT5) test compared to 61.5% average for city and 46.4% for similar schools

Snapshot: Principal's quote: "We embraced the Effective Schools model. The district mandated it, and we really bought into it. We were all looking to do better--teachers, parents and supervisors...We support parent involvement. We constantly evaluate our program, and we look at what has worked and what has not worked." Teacher's quote: "The principal is the instructional leader and is very charismatic. Children come first for her. Teachers meet and develop a framework. Every grade is represented. We're all dedicated and very close knit. Arts are important here." Parent's quote: "This school is very strong in the arts. My daughter is so motivated to do well because it's interesting. The parents and the teachers work together, and we are kept informed of the changes." On teachers: "My first choice would be to get candidates who have all the necessary education and training. [For those that do not] we provide a lot of support for them. And I ask them to do a demonstration lesson. This demonstrates their potential. I can see it immediately. It's like a stage presence. It's important that I get results early. In elementary school, personality is important." Assistant principals perform informal and formal evaluations, but unit testing is also reviewed. Instructional strategy: There are weekly mini-tests in each class. "We work as a team so that every one knows everything that is going on. We're a bunch of yentas." Believes that principals need to lead by example and must be workaholics. "But it's an internal thing. Analyze what is not going well. Prioritize. You can't work on too many things at one time. Get a buy-in of all constituents for your goals." In June has an orientation session for parents of entering kindergarten students to outline what they need to do over the summer to prepare their children for school. Throughout the year parents in all grades are given an outline of the reading program. In September holds an Open House for all parents. Each grade invites their students' parents in to tell them what the children will need and gives them a curriculum hand-out and informs them of school rules." Parents must sign a code of behavior. Problem: "The school lost funding for its librarian. So the Library Power program withdrew its support."

APPENDIX B
EPP'S INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How many students are enrolled in the school?

2. What is the school grade organization? K to 6, K to 5, K to 8? Pre-K to 6? Other?

3. Do most of the children come in from K or pre-K?

4. What is your average class size?

5. Do you have special education classes in your school? Do you have any responsibility for them? Are these students following the same curriculum?

6. Do you have bilingual, ESL or Immersion?

7. What is your student mobility rate? From September to June how many come into the school and how many leave? From the first grade, how many of the original students stay with you until third grade? Sixth grade?

8. What is your school day like? Do you have an after-school program?

9. How old is the school building? Was your school always located in this building?

10. Are you happy with your custodian? Are there repairs that need to be done in the school?

11. What is your staffing? How many teachers (by grade), how many cluster teachers (by subject), how many paras (by grade and function), how many aides (by function), guidance counselor(s), secretaries, librarian(s), AP(s), custodians and helpers, guards, staff developer(s) Other?.

12. How many students, on average, are in a class K, 1 to 3, 4 to 6?

13. Do you have homogeneous or heterogeneous classes?

14. Do you have a Gifted and Talented program?

15. Do you have a library? Librarian? When do children come to the library? How do you fund the library?

SHORT ANSWER SECTION:

1. Where do the children come from? The immediate neighborhood? The district?

2. What are the characteristics of the parents?

3. What are the special characteristics of the children who attend this school?

4. Is there a drug or safety problem in the neighborhood? Around the school?

5. Is there an outside community service organization providing services in your building? An outside staff development organization (university, consultant, or other)? Program with a business or community group?

LONG ANSWER SECTION:

1. What accounts for this school's success?

2. How long have you been at this school? Was it always high achieving? What changes were made? Who made them?

3. Does your school have a mission statement or a philosophy/approach to learning? What is it?

4. Why is your school doing better than other schools?

FOCUSED ANSWER SECTION:

A. TEACHERS

1. How long have most teachers been at your school?

2. How many are unlicensed?

3. How do you hire teachers? Central referrals? District referrals? Convert subs into licensed in place? College? Other?

4. How many teachers transfer in? Why?

5. How do teachers hear about your school? Friends in the district? University or college?

6. What do you look for in a new teacher? Have you found a pattern between their background and their performance in the classroom?

7. Please describe what you do with new teachers in their first year of teaching?

8. What do you do with a teacher who is performing below par?

9. How do you motivate teachers?

10. What is the key focus of your management of teachers? Why do you think you have succeeded as an educational leader while many other principals do not?

11. Do teachers work extra hours in this school? What are these extra-hour activities? Do they get paid for this extra work?

B. PLANNING COMMITTEE AND AP

1. Do you have a school planning committee? Who is on it?

2. Who are the critical members who make decisions?

3. What is your role in this committee?

4. What are the committee's strengths and weaknesses?

5. What would happen to the school if the planning committee didn't exist?

6. If you have an AP, what is the AP's role?

CURRICULA AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

1. Is there any particular curricula or approach that you are using throughout the school?

2. What are you using to teach reading? Math? Science? Art? Do you use one series of books? Who chooses them? How often do publishers' representatives come to your school? Do they do training?

4. What strategies do you use to help low-performing students? High performing students? What group of students is your primary focus?

6. Have you made any changes in the curricula over the past 5 years? Why? Do you plan any further changes? Why? How do you involve teachers in these changes?

7. How does staff development work in your school? What is the focus of the staff development? Is it provided by the district? Who decides on the content of staff development?

8. Do teachers provide you with their lesson plans? Is there team planning? Do you use CIMS (Comprehensive Instructional Management Systems)? How?

9. How do you bring the arts into the school?

10. Do you have a sports program?

11. How many computers do you have? How do you use them? Who pays for them?

12. Does the BOE/SED standardized testing program help or hurt the school? If you could change the tests, what would you do?

BUDGET

1. How much Title I and PCEN funds do you get? How do you use these funds?

2. If you had more funding, what would you spend it on?

3. Do you have guidance counselors? How do you fund them?

4. How do you fund your staff development?

5 How do you go about fundraising? Do you get central help? District help? Help from parents? Help from teachers? Help from CBO's?

6. BOE is now piloting school-based budgeting. What would you do if you could control your own budget?

7. Have budget cutbacks affected you? Has anyone been excessed? Has there been attrition?

8. What is your biggest budget problem?

PARENTS

1. How much contact do you have with parents of new students? With other parents?

2. What activities do you have for parents? Do you put out a calendar? Do you have a "contract"?

3. What do you see is the most important role of parents?

4. Do parents fundraise?

5. Do parents volunteer? How do you use them?

6. Do parents advocate with the district or participate in school board elections?

7. Do parents attend workshops on helping their children to learn how to read or do homework? What other workshops does your school offer?

8. Do parents participate in the school planning committees? Are they involved in curricula discussions or changes in school organization?

9. How do the teachers interact with parents?

10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your parent involvement program? Does the district help? The CBO? What more has to be done?

SCHOOL AND SYSTEMWIDE REFORMS

1. Does the district help the schools in your district? Does the district help your school? Do you think the central office of the Board of Education provides meaningful assistance to schools? Your school?

2. Who provides support to you as a principal? (Can include spouse, national networks, other principals, teachers.)

3. What, in your background, do you think helped you be an effective principal? Can this be duplicated for other principals?

4. What are the three things that you believe have helped raise student achievement in your school? What are the three things that make this more difficult?

5. How do you relate to the UFT Chapter leader? DC 37?

6.. If you were advising a new principal in this district, what would be your advice to her/him?

7. How should principals be prepared for their jobs?

8. What are the most common mistakes that poorly performing principals make?

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APPENDIX C:
ESTIMATES OF THE COST OF REDUCING EARLY-GRADE CLASS SIZES

Lowering average class sizes also constitutes a major investment. The New York City public school system has the largest average class sizes in the state at all grade levels. In the elementary grades, for example, the average class size for school districts outside of New York City is 22 students, while in the city it is 28. The collective bargaining agreement with the United Federation of Teachers limits general education class sizes to a maximum of 32 pupils in elementary schools, but this maximum can be exceeded if the school is overcrowded or if the distribution of students into classes results in one class with sixteen or fewer children. This last exception is called "breakage," and in bad budget years "breakage" is used extensively by community school district superintendents to reduce the numbers of teachers needed in each school. The City Council initiated a Board of Education policy to keep class sizes from first to third grade to an "average" of 25 students. From 1990 to 1997, community school districts were allowed "waivers" in "early grade caps" to increase class sizes in these grades so as to absorb a total of $2.7 billion in budget cuts. In addition, in 1994 the Mayor succeeded in exempting public schools from New York City Department of Health regulations setting adult-child ratios in kindergarten classes. The result of this exemption is that only half of the kindergarten classes have a paraprofessional in addition to the regular classroom teacher.

A 1998 study conducted by the New York City Independent Budget Office for New York City Public Advocate Mark Green found that more children in the early grades than expected are in large class sizes. 65% of all K-3 classes have twenty-five or more students and 13% classes have twenty nine or more students. The purpose of this study by the IBO was to come up with a cost estimate to the city of reducing kindergarten to third grade class sizes to no more than 20 or 18 students. Besides the municipal budget, there are two other sources of funding for class size reductions in the early grades:

Federal As a result of the October 1998 budget agreement providing $2.2 billion for class size reduction, New York City will receive $51 million for this purpose in the 1999-2000 school year, excluding percentages that can go to administration and to staff development. This was a one-year appropriation, but President Clinton has stated his intention to have this funding continued and may once again threaten to veto the Congressional budget if it is not continued. His proposal for fiscal year 2000 is $2.4 billion, a 9% increase. Since the cost estimate provided below is a projection of the 2001-2002 school year, EPP will assume that Congress will continue to fund this program and that New York City will receive $55.59 million in federal funds.

State As a result of the August 1997 budget agreement, in return for a property tax relief program that will benefit far more rural and suburban taxpayers, the five large cities were to benefit from pre-school programs for all four-year-olds and class size reductions in the early grades. By the 2001-02 school year, the New York City public schools were to get $146.25 million in state funds. As this report is being prepared, the Governor is attempting to nullify this

1997 budget agreement by replacing these dedicated funding streams for urban school districts with a block grant for all school districts in the state and at a reduced funding level.

The IBO cost estimate for early-grade class size reductions is based on two scenarios. In the high cost scenario all students remain in their current schools, and in the lower cost scenario some children are reassigned to different schools within a district to take advantage of underutilization in some schools. It should be noted that the IBO makes the assumption that the cost of additional teachers should be based on the average salary of teachers, but new teachers will be hired to lower class sizes so actual costs should be lower than these estimates. EPP has retained this salary cost estimate as well as the IBO's formula for additional cluster teachers, supplies, and staff development, additional custodial and security service costs, though we believe that actual costs may be lower. On the capital side, we have included IBO's deduction of the $10,000 per classroom which is allowable under the state class size reduction grants, but we have also included state reimbursement for capital costs through the state Building Aid formula to come up with an estimate of net debt service costs to the city. IBO made its projects based on the 1997-98 school year. Since enrollment increases have leveled off, growth in the projected number of students in the early grades is not expected unless more parents decided to send their children to public schools because of smaller class sizes.

Estimated Cost of Class Size Reduction in 2001-02 School Year

	High Cost	**Low Cost**
Operating Costs		
Additional classes	4,657	3,277
Total operating cost	$335,937,000	$236,389,000
Federal & state funds	$201,840,000	$201,840,000
Net costs to the city	$134,097,000	$34,549,000
Capital Costs		
New classrooms	2,972	592
Construction/renovation	$1.408 billion	$269.5 million
Annual debt service	$102.346 million	$19.586 million
State building aid	60%	60%
Net costs to the city	$40.938 million	$7.834 million

APPENDIX D:
UNDERFUNDING OF NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS

The New York City school system is underfunded, especially for the Downstate region The city's average per-pupil expenditure is above average for the nation, but so are all other dollar measures of costs, such as wages, taxes, and construction. A more appropriate measuring stick is New York State. EPP, in a review of the previous decade[1], found that in 1984, for the first time in state history, the average per-pupil funding level of the New York City school system fell below the average for the state. The reason that this was a "watershed" year is that the public school population in the city started to increase, largely due to immigration. Both the city's and the state's system for funding public education minimizes reductions due to shrinking student enrollment, but provides inadequate increases for growing enrollment. Consequently, over the last fifteen years as the enrollment in the city's public schools boomed, per-pupil resource levels continued to fall in comparison to the state-wide average.

In comparison to the average per-pupil expenditure for the rest of the state, which was $6,624 in the 1996-97 school year, the average per-pupil expenditure in New York City was $5,118.[2] This "funding gap" is actually even more dramatic if average per-pupil expenditures are compared to the five other counties in the high-cost downstate region. Using the State Education Department's 1998 *State of Learning*, which includes additional expenditures for school bus transportation and debt service as well as other costs, these are the average per-pupil expenditures in the 1995-96 school year in the Downstate region: [3]

Rockland	$12,781
Westchester	$12,701
New York City	$8,213
Nassau	$12,255
Suffolk	$11,688

The unweighted average[4] for per-pupil expenditures in the four counties outside of New York City is $12,356, which means that, in comparison, city per-pupil expenditures are $4,143 below the surrounding suburban counties.

Instruction for general education students is underfunded in New York City The 1998 *State of Learning* now includes new tables comparing general education and special education instructional expenditures by school district. This 1995-96 data excludes all expenditures associated with school bus transportation and debt service as well as central administration. The data below show that special education per-pupil instructional expenditures are in line with those of other Downstate school districts and that New York City has a slightly smaller proportion of students in special education[5]:

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[1] *Budget Briefing 1990: A Graphic Review of the Decade in New York City Schools*, 1990.

[2] Table 10, *Analysis of School Finances of New York State School Districts* issued by the NYS Education Department December 1998. Per-pupil expenditures are Approved Operating Expenditures (AOE) per Total Aidable Pupil Units for Expense (TAPU for Exp.), which means that expenditures for building construction debt and school bus transportation are not included and that the student count is adjusted for attendance as well as weighted for high school, kindergarten, students with disabilities, and students attending summer school.

[3] These per-pupil expenditures include debt service, transportation, and more payments for special education and vocational services.

[4] Unweighted average means not taking into account the numbers of students in each county.

	Gen. Ed.	Sp.Ed.	% Sp. Ed.
Rockland	$7,261	$14,887	13.0%
Westchester	$7,637	$15,446	11.4%
New York City	$4,399	$15,321	10.1%
Nassau	$7,663	$13,874	11.3%
Suffolk	$6,967	$13,397	13.0%

The unweighted average[6] for per-pupil expenditures for general education instruction in the four counties outside of New York City is $7,382, which means that, in comparison, city per-pupil general education instructional expenditures are $2,983 below the surrounding suburban counties.

This per-pupil instructional "gap" of $2,983 is smaller than the $4,143 "gap" when all the city's school system expenditures are compared to the average for the suburban counties. This means that a greater share of available educational resources, on average, goes to school instruction in the city than in the surrounding counties, which is contrary to public opinion. Some of this difference is understandable because suburban school districts must provide more school bus transportation to their students than in the city, where students often walk to school and, in the higher grades, take public transportation. The four counties also have small school districts and tend to have smaller schools, which increases administrative costs.

The other major reason why New York City directs a greater proportion of available funds to the school level is that this school system receives far more federal and state funds for low-income and immigrant children than the surrounding school districts that educate more affluent and more English-speaking children. In the 1995-96 school year, The NYC Comptroller's Report shows that funding from federal Title 1, state PCEN, and federal and state Magnet Grants and Bilingual programs amounted to $798.8 million. Most of these funds are spent at the school level. On the other hand, this additional funding from compensatory programs tends to give the impression that these resources are available to all general education students. For general education students not receiving additional remedial or bilingual services, per-pupil instructional expenditure could be conservatively estimated to be $799 lower. This would mean that for the one-third of general education students who do not receive extra services, the per-pupil expenditure is about $3,500. Since a large majority of general education students in the more affluent suburbs are not the recipients of federal or state funded services for low-income and immigrant students, the "gap" increases to $3,887.

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[5] These per-pupil expenditures do not include debt service, transportation, and more payments for special education and vocational services.

[6] Unweighted average means not taking into account the numbers of students in each county.

APPENDIX E:
ESTIMATES OF THE COST OF ADDING STAFF TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

This data is presented to provide benchmarks to evaluate the relative additional costs of adding more administrative staff to the school level. Hypothetically, if every elementary school were to get one or one more assistant principal at an average cost (including salary and fringes such as Social Security contributions and health plan costs) of $75,724, an additional out-of-classroom-professional staff person, such as a guidance counselor at an average cost of $63,339, and an additional school secretary whose primary duty would be to assist the principal and assistant principals at an average cost of $40, 326, the total additional costs (not including pension contributions) would come to $179,389 per school each year, based on current salary levels. Another possibility, which would bring estimated costs lower, would be to substitute a part-time school aide for the school secretary at an average cost of $16,789. In this low-cost scenario, we would also assume that the additional out-of-classroom-professional staff person would be a library science teacher or staff developer who would be recruited from the existing ranks of teachers. The additional cost of a new teacher, $38,164, would come from having to hire new teachers to fill vacancies created by these new assignments for more senior teachers. The total additional costs including fringes (but not pension) of this low-cost scenario would come to $130,677 per school. It could be expected that as a matter of parity, the staff in middle and high schools would also be increased.

Below are the systemwide costs, based on the number of schools that appear in the latest available *School Based Expenditure Reports.* Should the city and the Board of Education come to a collective bargaining agreement with the Council of Administrators and Supervisors, this cost estimate would increase.

Number of Schools		Added Staff	Cost of AP, GC, Secy	Cost of AP, Teacher, Aide
Elem.	672	2,016	$120,549,408	$87,814,944
Middle	196	588	$35,160,244	$25,612,692
H.S.	195	585	$34,980,855	$25,482,015
Total	1063	3,189	$190,690,507	$138,909,651

Given that middle schools and high schools have more assistant principals and out-of-the-classroom professionals, such as librarians and guidance counselors, than elementary schools, it may be possible that the complaints of lack of staff support are more of a problem for elementary school principals. Even if there were an investment in management for elementary schools alone, our hypothetical staffing increase would come to a cost of between $87.8 million and $120.6 million. Should the Board of Education make a major commitment to support instructional management at the school level, an objective study should be conducted by an outside consulting firm of the relative workloads and work products of assistant principals and out-of-the-classroom professionals at elementary, middle and high school levels. In past EPP studies, we have observed instances at the middle school and high school level where teachers, guidance counselors, and assistant principals were assigned to clerical tasks because of the unavailability of clerical workers. This is a high-cost solution to understaffing. Based on the conclusions of such a study, it might be possible that parity across the system might not be necessary and that additional clerical workers or the automation of clerical tasks at the middle and high school levels might reduce cost estimates significantly.

APPENDIX F:
STAFFING AT CENTRAL, DISTRICT, AND SCHOOL LEVELS

Given the general underfunding of the New York City Board of Education, a persistent "solution" that is offered for inadequate staffing at the school level is to transfer funding for personnel from other levels of the system. EPP looked at personnel and budget increases over a two-year period to see whether 1) resources have disproportionately gone to central and district levels and 2) whether sufficient resources can be shifted to the school level to fund our $87.8 to $120.6 million scenarios outlined in Appendix E. This "solution" seems unlikely.

Part of the problem with this putative "solution" is that there is often a misunderstanding about the functions of personnel labeled "central." The majority of these positions are personnel on the central payroll but assigned to the school level, such as lunch room workers and custodians. Nevertheless, because of the persistence of this argument, EPP staff marshaled the best evidence available of staffing levels at the district and central levels to investigate whether this "solution" is realistic. On a monthly basis, the Board of Education sends a *Financial Status Report* to all budget monitoring agencies which reports budgeted and filled positions at all levels of the school system. We have combined "Total Filled Full-Time Positions," which reflects the status of tax-levy funded positions, and "Total Categorical Program Positions" (which tracks the status of positions funded by Title 1 and other federal and state programs) in two reports, one at the end of the 1995-96 school year and a more current report. The Board of Education provided EPP with adjustments in headcounts reflecting "holding positions," that is, those that are temporarily listed as part of the tax-levy headcount, but will be transferred to the categorical headcount once approval has been granted. The "central" positions in these headcounts do not include lunch room workers and custodial workers, but under the "categorical" headcount code 5355 for "centrally administered instruction" some school or district positions have been included. By combining increases in both categorical and tax-levy positions, we get the following breakdowns:

BOE Financial Status Report	5/31/96	11/24/98	Increase in Headcount	
Total positions	101,769	114,792	13,023	12.8%
Positions excluding CSD instruction, Central & CSD admin., private schools	49,293	56,399	7,106	14.4%
Private school instruction (categorical only)	344	440	96	27.9%
CSD instruction elementary & middle schools	46,675	51,846	5,171	11.1%
CSD operations & admin.	2,268	2,578	310	13.6%
Central office (including categorical codes 5353 and 5355)	3,189	3,529	340	10.7%

Headcount increases attributable to
elementary & middle school instruction: 39.7% CSD admin.: 2.4% Central admin. 2.6%

Budget staff in one community school district office informed EPP that not all central headcounts are reflected in these reports, especially under the "Categorical" funded positions. We made several inquiries of staff at the New York City Comptroller's office, the Independent Budget Office, the Office of Management and Budget, and the central Board of Education. We are satisfied that this information is erroneous. All staff are included in the headcount system except for school custodial workers and lunchroom aides. The problem in attempts to track headcounts over many years is that there are frequent changes in titles as well as changes in whether these positions are designated as school-based, district-based, or central-based and as tax-levy or categorically funded. These problems did not present themselves in a two-year snapshot. We also looked at increases in expenditures for personnel (called Personal Services, abbreviated as "PS") at these different levels (Comptroller Report: Schedule G5-actual expenditures tax levy). Unfortunately, budget categories are not the same as headcount categories, so the amounts below do not reflect all personnel expenditures for positions funded by categorical funding. The category of "Total Personal Services" includes personnel for high schools, special education, facilities, and other divisions of the Board of Education.

NYC Comptroller Financial Report

	1995-96	1997-98	Increase	
Total Personal Services ($)	5,108,979,428	5,600,610,363	491,630,935	9.6%
CSD schools	1,677,348,924	1,790,724,612	113,375,688	6.8%
CSD admin.	119,453,217	165,570,184	46,116,967	38.6%
Central admin.	75,240,741	81,099,577	5,858,836	7.8%
Increases attributable to:	CSD schools 23.1%	CSD admin. 9.4%	Central admin. 1.2%	

Total personnel expenditure increases for CSD and Central administration: $51,975,803
Total personnel expenditure increases for elementary and middle schools: $113,375,688

We have presented the increases in headcount and personnel expenditures in some detail because the public perception of the numbers of staff at central and district levels is often skewed. Looking at the headcount figures above, as of November 1998, central administrative staff represented 3% of all full-time staff positions and central staff expenditures represented 1.4% of all personnel expenditures. Similarly, community school district administrative headcounts as of that date represented a 2.2% of total full-time staff and personnel expenditures represented 3% of all personnel expenditures. Even when central and community school district administrative headcounts and personnel expenditures are combined, they are in line with other large city school districts and are far *lower* than the average for smaller rural and suburban school districts. This information is rarely presented to the public by elected officials or the press.